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PERSIA

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BY

BRIGADIER-GENERAL SIR PERCY SYKES

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This little volume, containing a sketch of Persian history, was written with the idea of it forming part of a composite work on Arabia, Syria, Iraq, and Persia. That scheme having been abandoned, Arabia has recently been published, its author being the well-known authority Mr. D. G. Hogarth, and Persia now follows. I have found it extremely difficult to compress such a vast subject into less than two hundred pages, and this must be my answer to those who may complain of omissions.

P. M. S.

The Athenæum,
30 *March*, 1922.

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I

The Country and the People

The Persian Empire occupies the western and larger part of the Iranian plateau, which is situated between the Indus on the east and the Tigris and Euphrates on the west. Its altitude is considerable. Shiraz and Kerman in the south, Isfahan in the centre, and Kermanshah and Hamadan in the west all lie above 5,000 feet. In the north the altitude of Tabriz is over 4,000 feet and that of Teheran (the capital) and Meshed over 3,000 feet. The area of the country is enormous. The traveller who would pass from east to west in the north would traverse some 1,200 miles. From north to south the distance would average 600 to 700 miles.

The snow and rainfall are scanty, averaging ten inches in the north and five inches in the south. On the other hand, in the provinces bordering the Caspian Sea, the rainfall is very heavy. On the plateau the climate is intensely dry, with hot days and cold nights. In the Caspian provinces the heavy rainfall creates a moist, malarious, and most unhealthy climate. In the narrow strip of country bordering the Persian Gulf the climate, except close to the sea, is intensely hot and dry.

So scanty is the rainfall in view of the power of the sun that, but for the high ranges, the country would be a desert. A glance at the map will show that Persia is a mountainous country, and the snowfall on the high

ranges is preserved from melting during the winter and provides irrigation water for the crops in the spring. In Persia there is unlimited land, but very little water, and the higher the range the larger the population it supports by means of its life-giving water.

To take a brief survey of the mountain ranges, their most noticeable fact is the regularity of trend from south-east to north-west. The traveller from Mesopotamia who follows the historical route via Kermanshah and Hamadan to Teheran, close to ancient Rhages, crosses range after range of mountains—the classical Zagros—at right angles. Near Hamadan he sees the celebrated Mount Alvand rising to over 12,000 feet. At Teheran the Elburz range separates the plateau from the Caspian provinces, throwing up the stupendous peak of Demavand which dominates the capital at an elevation of over 19,000 feet. Moving westwards, at the extreme north-west corner of Persia, historical Ararat rises to over 17,000 feet. These great ranges have isolated the country from the sea, and at no time have the inhabitants of Persia been seafarers.

The heart of the country is a desert. I have crossed it in various parts and found stage after stage of hard gravel tracks to be succeeded by square miles covered with sand dunes. Where water has flowed down from the ranges, there is *Kavir*, salty ground dangerous to cross, covered with a white efflorescence or again with yellow slime. Water is very scarce and either salt or bitter : so that, apart from the risk of losing the way or being overwhelmed by one of the terrible storms which spare neither man or beast, there is much sickness among travellers owing to bad water and scanty food supplies.

The rivers of Persia are of little importance. It is possible to ride from north to south and from east to west, almost without crossing a river. Indeed from the Indus to the Shatt-al-Arab no important river reaches the sea. In the north the river, termed the Sufid Rud in its lower reaches, is the longest in Persia. In the south-west, the Karun is the only navigable river of Persia, and that for merely a short distance.

The Persian plateau is covered with steppe vegetation. This signifies that, instead of grass, there are stunted bushes growing several feet apart from one another and not covering the ground. Between them, in the spring, blades of grass afford scanty grazing for sheep and goats ; the bushes serve as camel grazing and fuel. The hills are bare, except for a very few stunted trees. There is, however, a large forest of dwarf oak in the Zagros range. The Caspian provinces are covered with forests, but they are not scientifically preserved and, near the coast, have been ruthlessly felled or burned. The country is washed by the Persian Gulf on its south-west coast. This landlocked body of water is entered from the Arabian Sea at the Straits of Hormuz which are only thirty-five miles wide. The traveller then steams for seven hundred miles up the gulf, which is always hot, passing along a sunburnt coast backed by serrated ranges close inland ; Bandar Abbas and Bushire, the ports, have no harbours, and ships have to lie a long way off shore. Few parts of the sea were more remote, but the Great War has transformed the position, and thousands of British and Indian troops have used what was the only route to Mesopotamia. There is yet another side to the Persian Gulf that may justly claim our

interest, for its waters probably witnessed the first feeble, timid attempts of man to navigate salt water.

The Caspian Sea washes Persian provinces in the north. There the harbours are potentially good, as there are extensive lagoons which ensure complete protection, once the bar be crossed. In the case of Enzeli, the chief port, expenditure is needed to cut a channel across the bar, but at Bandar Gaz, at the south-east corner, there is an ample depth of water.

Cultivation is generally carried on by irrigation, although in the north and west there are rain-fed crops of wheat and barley; these are the main crops, barley being the staple horse food. Rice, maize, millet, beans, cotton, opium, lucerne, and tobacco are also main crops. Persia is especially rich in fruit. Pears, apples, quinces, apricots, plums, peaches, nectarines, cherries, figs, pomegranates, almonds, pistachios, grapes, and melons grow best on the plateau; the date-palm, orange and lime are confined to the low-lying districts, which mainly, but not entirely, border the Persian Gulf. It is part of my theme to show how deeply Persia has influenced Europe. We owe to her the peach—the word is derived from the Latin *persica*—the orange, the lime, the pistachio nut, and possibly the vine. Of flowers, the jasmine, lilac, and narcissus not only come from Persia but have retained their Persian names, as have most of the fruits enumerated above.

The fauna of Persia include tigers, which abound in the jungles of the north, while a few lions are perhaps still left in the thickets of the Ab-i-Diz and elsewhere in Arabistan. Bears are not uncommon. Wolves, leopards, hyenas, lynxes, foxes, and jackals exist in considerable

numbers. Stags and roebucks roam the forests of the Caspian provinces and the fallow deer is found in the Zagros. The most common quarry is the wild sheep and the ibex in the hills and the gazelle in the plains. The wild boar is extremely abundant, but is rarely shot, as its flesh cannot be eaten. The wild ass is found near the salt swamps, but is somewhat rare.

There is no Census in Persia, and consequently estimates as to the population cannot claim accuracy. The general opinion is that the estimate of ten millions errs on the side of liberality. The population is sedentary and nomadic, the latter perhaps aggregating one-quarter. The large majority of the sedentary population is agricultural, living in villages and hamlets scattered all over the face of the country. The cities, which are comparatively small, have no manufactures of any importance, and owing to the lack of sanitation the population has to be constantly renewed from outside. The nomads are divided up into powerful tribes, among the most powerful of which are the Kashgais of Turkish origin in Fars, the Bakhtiaris, of Persian stock in the west-centre, and the Shah Savan in Azerbaijan. These tribesmen are extremely virile, possess splendid physique, and travel from the low-lands to the hills and back, grazing their immense flocks as they move slowly along. They are much addicted to robbery, and being but little controlled by the govern-ment are a curse to the peaceful villagers, who also suffer from locusts year after year in nearly every province. A difficult problem is to keep the routes and villages safe from the nomads and to collect revenue from them. Until Persia solves it there is little hope of progress.

2

The Foundation of the Persian Empire

Like many other nations, Persians, as they are termed in Europe, have a different name for themselves. The term 'Persian' comes to us from the classical Persis, a corruption of Pars (now Fars), the home of Achaemenian dynasty which founded the great Persian empire. But the inhabitants of the country term themselves Irani or Aryans, and their appearance on the stage of history was of momentous importance to the world, for the wonderful civilization of Europe is Aryan, and the Persian empire was the first great Aryan empire. After its foundation, the history of the ancient world became a struggle for ascendency between the Aryans of the north and the Semites of the south, ending in the complete victory of the Aryans.

In my *History of Persia*, I have dealt with the ancient civilization that has been proved to exist in the land of Elam, thanks to excavations carried out by French archaeologists at Susa, its capital. For many centuries Elam raided Babylonia with varying success, and fought campaigns with Assyria, but, in the middle of the seventh century B.C., Assyria sacked Susa and carried away its inhabitants, its gods, and its wealth. After this, the warlike kingdom of Elam broke up, and part of it was annexed by the neighbouring Achaemenian dynasty of Pars.

The first Aryan tribe to rise to power in Persia was that of the Medes, who inhabited the country north of Pars,

with their capital at Hagmatana, the classical Ecbatana, and the modern Hamadan. It is generally accepted that the Medes and Persians began to occupy what is now termed Persia about 2000 B. C. They were a primitive, pastoral people, owning horses, cattle, sheep, goats, and the watch-dog; they travelled in rude waggons with solid axles and wheels roughly hewn from a single trunk. They gradually gained possession of Western Persia and were quickly brought into contact with the great military power of Assyria. We read of expeditions undertaken by Tiglath-pileser I in the twelfth century B. C., and later on by his successors, who gradually gained control over the nearer provinces of Media, and taught the rude Aryans the arts of Semitic civilization, including writing. They learned their lesson, and when Assyria became a decadent power, Media, under Cyaxares, headed a confederacy, in which Nabopolassar king of Babylon played a part and, in 606 B. C., Assyria fell and disappeared.

The short-lived empire of Media succeeded to the heritage of Assyria in the north and conquered the uplands of Asia Minor until brought face to face with the kingdom of Lydia. Seven battles were fought between the two powers on the River Halys, the last being interrupted by a total eclipse of the sun in 585 B. C., after which portent terms of peace, sealed by marriage, were agreed to.

Cyaxares the Conqueror was succeeded by an indolent, voluptuous son, Astyages, who, after a long reign, saw the empire of Media pass into the hands of the Persians. The Greeks did not regard Media as having been overthrown, but rather looked upon the whole occurrence as

internal transformation, and this was undoubtedly the case.

The great figure of Cyrus the Great, the Achaemenian, now appears on the scene. Until comparatively recently the account given by Herodotus that he was the son of a Persian nobleman and of the daughter of Astyages was generally accepted. But the discovery of the cylinders of Nabonidus and of Cyrus has altered the entire situation. By the light of these documents Cyrus is shown to be King of Anshan, and from the Nabonidus tablet we learn that he defeated Astyages, whose troops revolted, and that he captured Ecbatana in 550 B.C., thereby winning the kingdom of the Medes. Cyrus is termed 'King of Anshan' in 549 B.C., but three years later he is called King of Persia. In this connexion there was an Anshan branch and also a Pars branch of the Achaemenian dynasty, and as Hystaspes of the Pars branch, who was the father of Darius, did not reign, he was probably passed over, as a minor, and Cyrus reigned in his place. This double line of monarchs is referred to by Darius in the Behistun rock inscription and for a long while puzzled the historian.

Cyrus, as the ruler of Persia and Media, had to prove himself fit to take over the Empire. Nabonidus, the King of Babylon, it is true, was peace-loving, but it was far otherwise with the Lydians. Alyattes, who had made the treaty with Cyaxares, had been succeeded by Croesus, possessed of fabulous wealth, which has become proverbial. Like his father he was ambitious and warlike, and had fought successfully to bring the Greek colonies of Asia Minor under his sway. Eastwards too, he had made good his position up to the Halys. These latter conquests were

very recent and were hardly completed when Cyrus was fighting Astyages.

Croesus, who suffered from overweening pride, determined to attack the new power before it was consolidated, and encouraged, as he imagined, by the oracle of Delphi, he began to collect a powerful force, engaging Spartan mercenaries in large numbers. Cyrus determined to attack Croesus immediately. The decision to march at least one thousand miles from his base, with a probably hostile Babylon threatening his lines of communication, and to surprise his powerful enemy, proves the daring of this great soldier. The result showed the accuracy of his calculations, as upon reaching the Halys, he found Croesus unprepared. Negotiations were opened, probably with a view of gaining time so far as Croesus was concerned, but they led to nothing. The two forces then met, but although the Lydians gained the first battle they were finally routed and retired westwards laying waste the country as they proceeded. Croesus with incredible fatuity acted on the assumption that the winter would stop all operations, and not only arranged for the Spartans to defer their arrival until the spring, but actually disbanded part of his force. Cyrus proved his genius for war by making a second rapid march on Sardes. He was met by the renowned Lydian cavalry, but by employing the ruse of covering the front of his army with camels, the smell of which terrified the horses of the Lydians, he obtained a decisive victory. He completed this success by scaling the fortress of Sardes, surprising the garrison, and capturing Croesus. Sardes fell in 546 B.C.

The Persians were now brought into contact with the

Ionian Greeks of the coast of Asia Minor. They were able to attack them in detail and gradually subdued them, with the result that the Persian Empire was brought into contact with Hellas.

Shortly after the capture of Sardes, Cyrus marched due east, and for a period of five years he was waging wars with almost unknown tribes. It is probable that the eastern provinces of the empire refused to accept the new order without a struggle, and were encouraged to rise by the absence of Cyrus in Lydia. We read that Bactria was first attacked, and this rather confirms the theory of internal troubles. In any case Cyrus was successful in subduing the eastern provinces and returned victorious to Pasargadae, his capital.

To complete his task, he attacked Babylon. That ancient kingdom was governed by Nabonidus, whose ruling passion was archaeology. In pursuance of his studies he sought for the foundation-cylinders of the ancient sanctuaries, which he rebuilt. He also brought into Babylon the gods of Ur, Uruk, and Eridu, which acts excited intense ill-feeling among both the priests and people of those ancient cities. Finally he was a cypher and tool of the priesthood of Babylon.

Cyrus forced his way into the protected area of Babylon by draining the waters of the Tigris and Diyala when these rivers were at their lowest. He marched north and defeated the main Babylonian army at Opis, while his general Gaubaruva, or Gobryas, marched south, and driving Nabonidus before him, entered Babylon, as the cylinder records it, 'without skirmish or battle in 538 B.C.' Cyrus gave orders for the protection of the city, and

upon his arrival he was welcomed as a deliverer. How different is this, the true account, from that enshrined in tradition. We have all read the dramatic accounts given by Herodotus and supplemented by the book of Daniel, how Cyrus diverted the water of the Euphrates, marched along its dry bed and surprised the Babylonian monarch, who had received an impressive warning from Daniel.

Nine years after the surrender of Babylon, Cyrus again marched eastwards, this time probably to meet an invasion by the nomads of Central Asia. It appears that he was killed in battle, and his body was brought back to Pasargadae, where it was buried in a tomb which still exists, and is surely among the greatest and most sacred of monuments to us Aryans, for Cyrus is one of the most attractive figures in history, and does not the book of Isaiah run : 'Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden . . . I have even called thee by thy name ?'

3

The Persian Empire and Hellas

The invasion of Egypt had been planned during the life of Cyrus, and his successor Cambyses, with an army accustomed to conquer, marched out to extend the bounds of the Persian Empire to the continent of Africa. Amasis of Egypt had undoubtedly watched the rise of Persia with deep anxiety, as he saw first Lydia and then Babylon fall before her irresistible leader. The Egyptians were not good soldiers, and Greek mercenaries constituted the real

fighting force. An alliance with various Greek islanders was also made, but when the crisis came the experienced Amasis was dead, and his son was deserted both by the leader of his Greek mercenaries and by his allies.

The chief protection of Egypt against an invader from the north has ever been the belt of desert, some 150 miles wide, which lies between Gaza and the delta cultivation. Cambyses was in doubt how to secure the necessary supplies of water, when the Greek general of Amasis, who had deserted his master, induced the Arab chiefs to collect thousands of camel loads of water at the various stages and thus solved the difficult problem. The Persian army crossed the desert and defeated the Egyptian army at Pelusium. The Greek mercenaries fought desperately, but the Persians overwhelmed them with superior numbers. Cambyses immediately marched on Memphis, which, after holding out for some time, surrendered. Its fall ended the campaign. The Persian empire was now by far the greatest the world had ever seen. It stretched from the Sir Daria to the Nile and from the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea. Assyria had indeed conquered Egypt, but her armies had never penetrated to eastern Persia, much less to Central Asia, nor had Lydia, at any time, come within her orbit.

Cambyses committed suicide in 521 B.C. The throne of Persia was then seized by Gaumata, a Magian, who claimed to be Bardiya, a younger brother of Cambyses, whereas that monarch had put Bardiya to death by way of precaution, before leaving Persia for the Egyptian campaign. For some time Gaumata was universally recognized, but Darius, on his return from Egypt, penetrated

to his castle in Media without any followers, except the heads of the great Persian tribes, and slew the impostor.

The empire was, however, shaken to its foundations, for the Persians believed in the impostor, who had won them over by a remission of taxes, and governors of provinces hoped to carve out kingdoms for themselves. Under these circumstances, Darius was faced by rebellions in Elam, in Babylon, in Media, and even in Persia, in addition to outbreaks in the distant provinces. But he was a great ruler, possessed of immense resolution and tenacity, and after three years of desperate fighting, Darius sat on the throne of Cyrus unchallenged. In the celebrated bas-relief at Behistun, the monarch is portrayed as rejoicing over the pretenders with his left foot on Gaumata, while the other rebels, as he termed them, who are severally named, stand before him bound.

Cyrus was the conqueror and Darius was the administrator. Under his organizing genius the empire was divided into satrapies, each ruled by a satrap, whose powers were checked by a general and a secretary of State, all three officials reporting direct to the capital. Inspectors of the highest rank were also sent out in command of strong bodies of troops to report on the satrap and other officials. The system prevented rebellions, and probably the satrap was not interfered with in his administration. The satrapies were assessed partly in money and partly in kind, as in Persia of to-day. The total revenue in money was about the equivalent of three and a half million pounds sterling, a sum which was enormous in those days. Unfortunately the Achaemenian monarchs hoarded much of the gold, as a reserve in time

of need, and thereby hindered the development of commerce. On the other hand Darius coined *darics* in gold and *siglioi* (a corruption of the Hebrew word shekel) in silver, and it is an interesting fact that the English pound sterling and the shilling are almost the exact equivalents of these old coins.

The military organization of the empire was defective. Darius maintained an imperial body-guard, consisting of 2,000 cavalry and 2,000 infantry, below whom ranked the ten thousand 'Immortals'. This force of guards was supported by bodies of Persians and Medians, posted at various important centres, who might perhaps also claim to be considered as regular troops. In case of war, large numbers of untrained levies were assembled by each province, differing in language, equipment, and manner of fighting from one another. Such a force was necessarily unwieldly, and as will be seen, was unable to face comparatively small numbers of drilled and disciplined Greeks fighting in rugged ground suitable to their tactics.

Darius realized the importance of good communications, and the Royal Road which ran from Sardes to Susa was kept in comparatively good order, with posts well supplied with horses established at every few miles. The distance was about 1,500 miles, and in view of the rapid movement of couriers in the east, dispatches were probably received in fifteen days.

Darius was the great administrator, but he was also ambitious of military success. He attempted to conquer Southern Russia, and overran it, but was obliged to recross the Danube. He, however, annexed Thrace and received the submission of Macedonia. On the eastern confines of

the empire, Persian troops marched down from the edge of the Iranian plateau and annexed provinces of the Panjab and part of Sind.

An expedition of Darius against Hellas failed. To him its importance was probably not very great, but to us the battle of Marathon evokes imperishable memories. From the Persian point of view, the Athenians and Eretrians had aided the Ionian Greeks of Asia Minor in a revolt that was finally crushed, but yet had to its credit the capture of Sardes. Darius ordered a punitive expedition to be dispatched, and as there were serious internal divisions at Athens its chances of success seemed considerable. But the Persians unwisely first punished the petty state of Eretria—a minor objective—and time was given for the Athenians to prepare. Not that this lessens the heroism of the heroic Ten Thousand, who charged down and surprised the Persian army in the Bay of Marathon, driving it back to the ships with heavy losses. The result of this defeat was not decisive, so far as Persia was concerned, but it raised the *moral* of Hellas to a degree that has rarely been surpassed.

Darius died in 485 B.C. Like Cyrus, his personal character stood very high; he was remarkably intelligent and reasonable, and even the Greeks, his bitter enemies, wrote of him with respect.

And what was the religion that produced such men as Cyrus and Darius, with qualities so splendid, and so unlike those of the Semitic Great Kings? The religion of the Persians, although it was perhaps not fully accepted before the reign of Darius, was that preached by Zoroaster. This great prophet was perhaps born in the eighth

century B. C., but there is much difference of opinion on this point. He preached the conception of a supreme deity under the name of Ahura Mazda or Great Lord, and in the Gathas it is believed that the actual words of Zoroaster have descended to us. Coeval with Ahura Mazda, fundamentally hostile to him and able to thwart his beneficent acts for a while, is Ahriman, the spirit of Evil. In the teaching of Zoroaster, the whole creation was a combat between Good and Evil. Man plays a noble part, as his will supports Ahura Mazda, and finally assures his conquest over evil or the Lie. The ideal life is represented to be that of the farmer with wife, children, and cattle, who works hard to cultivate the land and secures a rich return. The dog, as man's protector and guard, is referred to as 'self-clothed and self-shod, watchful, wakeful, and sharp-toothed, born to take his food from man and to watch over man's goods'. In return, to kill a dog was a crime heinous as that of homicide. On the other hand, the ants that steal the corn, lizards, frogs, serpents, and flies were held to be accursed.

The doctrine of the resurrection was first preached by Zoroaster, who taught that man would receive reward or punishment after death. The good would be welcomed by Ahura as honoured guests, but the wicked would fall into the 'Abode of Lie', to become the slaves of Ahriman. The influence of Zoroastrianism on Judaism, and indirectly on Christianity, is considerable, and there is no doubt that its influence taught the Persians to adopt ideals higher than any then known in the world.

Darius was succeeded by Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther. At first the new monarch was

occupied in crushing rebellions in Egypt and Babylon, the latter city being treated with such severity that her influence and commerce never recovered.

Xerxes, fond of pleasure and indolent, was averse from a campaign against Hellas. But his kinsman Mardonius, who had commanded in Thrace, constantly urged that the honour of Persia was at stake, and accordingly immense preparations were made for concentrating a huge force for the invasion of Hellas. We have all read in the pages of Herodotus how Leonidas held Thermopylae and won immortal fame, and how the huge Persian army overran Attica. The Greeks, who were the prototypes of the marines, equally good fighters on sea and land, decided to stake everything on a sea-fight. In 480 B.C., at Salamis, they fought between that island and the mainland, and although appalled at first by the desperate odds, their homogeneity and the courage of despair gave them the victory against heavy odds. Creasy considered Marathon a decisive battle of the world, but surely the claims of Salamis are greater. The Persians had relied mainly on their ships for supplies, and when Mardonius represented to Xerxes that, if given command of the picked troops, he could still conquer Hellas, the craven monarch readily agreed and hastened back to the security and luxury of Asia.

Hellas completed her task by the defeat of Mardonius at Plataea in 479 B.C. At this memorable engagement, the heavily armed and almost invulnerable hoplites hacked their way to victory through masses of heroic Persians. The battle of Mycale, fought at the same time, shattered Persian suzerainty over the Greeks of Asia Minor.

It has been assumed by many writers that Persia was doomed because of her defeat by Hellas. Far from it. The empire was undoubtedly shaken by the loss of prestige, men, and material, but for another century and a half Persia played the leading part in the history of the known world. In the generations that followed Salamis and Plataea, she withdrew from adventures in the west, and although we read detailed accounts of Greek naval successes, it is unlikely that they were of more than local importance. On the other hand, when the Athenians took a hand in a revolt in Egypt, 460–454 B. C., the large Greek force was at first successful, both by land and sea. But a powerful Persian army appeared on the scene, and the Greeks who had occupied an island in the Nile were left high and dry as the result of a diversion effected upstream. Finally the entire force was killed or captured. In other cases the astute Persian satraps were able to bribe the Greeks to attack one another, so that, in one way or another, the balance of power remained in Persian hands.

Some eighty years after Salamis, Cyrus the Younger made a bid for the throne against his brother Artaxerxes Mnemon, relying on Greek hoplites, and nearly won. Assembling his troops at Sardes, he marched across Asia Minor to Tarsus. The Greeks, who had not realized that they were to march into the centre of the Persian Empire, at first refused to proceed, but an appeal to their cupidity was successful. Artaxerxes did not oppose the advance until the Euphrates had been crossed and the invaders had entered the province of Babylon. Cyrus believed that his brother had fled, and his army was almost surprised,

when a thick cloud of dust revealed the presence of a vast army. The Greeks on the right wing defeated the troops opposite them, whereas had they, as ordered by Cyrus, attacked the centre where the Great King was posted, their action would have been decisive. Cyrus with only six hundred cavalry gallantly charged the six thousand Cadusians surrounding the Great King. He slew their leader and opened a way to Artaxerxes whom he wounded and unhorsed. It must have seemed to him that the victory was his, when he was suddenly wounded by a javelin near the eye and then killed. Artaxerxes, who was only slightly wounded, upon hearing of the death of Cyrus gave the order to advance and won the battle of Cunaxa. The indomitable Greeks, the celebrated Ten Thousand, were permitted to march northwards without serious molestation, and under the leadership of Xenophon they crossed the ranges of Asia Minor, and from the summit of the last range exclaimed '*Θάλασσα! Θάλασσα!*' They then marched to Trebizond, where they regained touch with fellow Hellenes.

After the long reign of Artaxerxes Mnemon, Persia became a decadent state. Power was in the hands of eunuchs and women, and although rebellions inside the empire were crushed, dry rot had set in. In 336 B.C., Darius Codomanus, the last Achaemenian monarch, ascended the throne, and during his reign the great empire, which had dominated the known world for more than two centuries, came to an inglorious end.

4

The Conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great

The overthrow of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great ranks high among the greatest achievements of man. Persia, if decadent, was by no means easy to conquer. The satraps of Asia Minor had foiled Alexander's great father, whose generals had invaded their provinces, and the Persian fleet, supreme at sea, could create a diversion in Hellas, which was ever hostile to Alexander. For the Great Adventure his total force, of which perhaps one-half was Macedonian, consisted of only 30,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry; the Thessalians and surrounding tribes provided the balance of the number, including the light troops. Very few Greeks served in the Macedonian army, which was mainly composed of veterans who had fought under Philip and Alexander. They had the fullest confidence in their leader and their *moral* was superb. Mainly thanks to Philip, who evolved the phalanx, trained it and equipped it, the infantry was more formidable than any similar force in existence. The heavy cavalry, too, under the leadership of Alexander, was excellent, and invariably won the battles.

The expedition started in the spring of 334 B.C. Alexander made forced marches through Thrace to the Hellespont, and was much relieved to find no hostile fleet cruising in these narrow waters. Sestos on the European side and Abydos on the Asian coast were garrisoned by his

troops, and his army was transported to the Asiatic side without incident.

It is clear that the invasion was expected by the Persians, as Alexander, marching north along the coast, found a powerful force holding the right bank of the Granicus, a river which flows into the sea of Marmora near Cyzicus. The Persian army consisted of 20,000 Persian cavalry and a Greek infantry column of similar strength. Determined to keep the honour of defeating the Macedonians for the cavalry, the Persian leaders placed the Greek mercenaries in reserve, while the mounted troops lined the right bank of the Granicus, and prepared to deny it to the Macedonians. Alexander placed his infantry in the left wing, consisting mainly of two phalanxes, and kept the cavalry on the right. By threatening to outflank the Persian left, he induced the enemy to extend towards the threatened flank at the expense of his centre, and against this weakened point he directed his main attack. The advantage of position lay with the Persians, and they threw their javelins with effect against the Macedonians, who were struggling through the water to climb the bank and attack the Persians with their long spears. The fighting was fierce, and Alexander himself was only saved by the bravery of Clitus. Finally, the enemy centre was pierced, when the cavalry fled from the field, leaving the Greek mercenaries to be cut to bits by a combined cavalry and phalanx attack.

The fruits of victory included Sardes, which was tamely surrendered by its Persian governor. Alexander immediately began to administer the conquered provinces, separating the military and financial departments by placing

them in the hands of separate officials who were independent of one another. The capture of Sardes gave the victor immense prestige and also money, of which he was badly in need. His next step was to capture the Greek cities along the coast of Asia Minor, mainly for the purpose of depriving the Persian fleet of its bases. This was effected with success dearly purchased, but owing to the death of Memnon, who was the backbone of the resistance, the Persian fleet ceased to be a serious threat.

Alexander realized that he must soon fight a battle with the main army of the Great King, and hearing that a vast Persian force was being collected in the open plains to the east of the Syrian Gates, he marched across Asia Minor, following the route of Cyrus the Younger. The Cilician Gates were not held against him, and thanking the Gods for this piece of good fortune, he crossed the Taurus and descended to Tarsus.

Darius was waiting with his army in the open plains to the east of Issus on the Gulf of Iskanderun, and Alexander marched to meet him. He passed the Syrian Gates, and hearing that Darius, who had marched by a pass farther north, had seized Issus in his rear, he immediately marched back to fight for the lordship of Asia.

The site of this battle was a plain two miles wide lying between hills and the Gulf of Iskanderun. It was favourable for the relatively small force of Alexander, but cramped for the half million men composing the army of Darius. A river ran down to the sea in the middle of the plain. It is curious that each force fought facing its base.

The Persian army included 30,000 Greek mercenaries, a force by itself nearly equal to the whole force of

Alexander. Darius was posted in the centre. The Macedonian king fought in the same order as at the Granicus. He led his men forward to the river bank which the Persians were holding. They could not withstand the charge of Alexander, and fled, but the Greek mercenaries fought desperately with the phalanx. The cowardice of Darius lost the day, as he thought only of his personal safety, and fled, leaving his men to be killed by tens of thousands, both on the field and in the pursuit. Issus ranks as one of the decisive battles of the world, for after the victory it was clear to the Macedonians that no Persian army was of any fighting value without a large Greek contingent, and that the supply of Greek mercenaries in Persia was running short.

After Issus, Alexander, resolving to leave no hostile bases in his rear, besieged Tyre, which he took after a siege which has become famous. He then completed his task by the annexation of Egypt, where no defence was attempted.

There was now no port which could serve as a base for the Persian fleet left in the rear of his army, and Alexander decided to march rapidly eastwards, to meet the new force that Darius had assembled. He traversed the wide open plains unopposed, and crossing the Euphrates and then the Tigris marched southwards along the left bank of the latter river.

Not far from the ruins of ancient Nineveh, and seventy miles from Arbela, known to-day by the British officer in Irak as Erbil, Darius made his last stand on a wide plain. His army was even larger than at Issus, but he had fewer Greek mercenaries; fifteen elephants took their place in the line, the first to appear in an historical

battle. Alexander, who had carefully reconnoitred the battlefield, somewhat contemptuously marched across the front of the Persians towards their left wing. For a while Darius took no action, but when he realized that the Macedonians would soon reach ground too rough for chariots to manœuvre, he gave orders for the mounted troops on the left wing to charge simultaneously with the chariots. The cavalry gained some initial success, but, ultimately, both arms were routed. The charge of the Persian cavalry had left a gap in the line near Darius, who was, as at Issus, posted in the centre. Alexander charged, and Darius once again fled.

The Macedonian victory at Arbela was practically a foregone conclusion, unless Alexander were killed. But its importance was great, as it ended the armed resistance of Darius, who was thenceforward almost a fugitive. Babylon and Susa were the first spoils of the victor, who seized treasure of incredible value. Like Cyrus, he ' took the hands of Bel ' and rebuilt the temples destroyed by Xerxes.

From Susa, Alexander ascended the Iranian Plateau and occupied Persepolis and Pasargadae, the capitals of the Achaemenian dynasty. Darius had taken refuge at the summer capital of Ecbatana, and was stated to be preparing to fight a third battle, but on the approach of his enemy he fled to Rhages and thence eastwards along the main route to Meshed. Alexander occupied Ecbatana with its vast treasures, but continued the pursuit after the cowardly Darius to Rhages and beyond. He finally overtook the Persian monarch, only to find him assassinated by his satraps.

After the death of Darius, Alexander marched through the modern Herat province and then southwards to Sistan. He followed up the Helmand, founded Kandahar, and crossed the Hindu Kush, capturing Balkh, the capital of Bactria, the last remaining great city of the Persian Empire. But he was not yet content, and advanced to the Sir Daria, where he founded Alexandria Eschate or 'the Extreme', the modern Khojand. Here he was some 3,500 miles distant from Macedonia as the crow flies, this fact proving both the immensity of the Persian Empire and the enormous distance the Macedonian troops had marched.

Central Asia was the scene of the first disaster suffered by one of his commanders, but, in spite of strong opposition, he finally conquered and garrisoned it, and recrossing the Hindu Kush, marched down into India. His fight with Porus, who opposed the crossing of the Jhelum, is well known. The victory he gained was decisive, and he moved across the Panjab unopposed, intending to seek yet more glory in the Ganges Valley. But his veterans, who were longing to see their homes and enjoy their wealth, mutinied, and finally Alexander yielded to their wishes, and gave orders to return.

He built a fleet which descended the Jhelum and then the Indus to the sea. From the mouths of the Indus it skirted the Arabian Sea, while he led his veterans through the deserts of Baluchistan, losing thousands of men and most of his transport. But, upon reaching Persia, his officers met him with both transport and supplies, and the army marched in triumph to Susa, where, reunited with the fleet, it celebrated the termination of this wonderful expedition by a series of festivities and marriages.

Alexander died not long after at the early age of thirty-two, but so great was his personality, that his influence survived. Representing the culminating point of Greek civilization, he not only conquered but held his conquests, partly by military power, but still more by the Hellenic spirit of justice and civilization, so much so that Greek dynasties, permeated with this spirit, ruled in Asia, in provinces as remote as Bactria for many generations. The wars of the 'Successors', as they were termed, proved how Alexander alone had been able to control his generals, whose ambitions led them to do terrible deeds. For a generation there was civil war, during the course of which the family of Alexander was exterminated. Eleven years after the death of the Great Conqueror, Seleucus occupied Babylon and founded a dynasty, which lasted for two centuries. With the space at my disposal it is impossible to write more about the Seleucids than that they kept alight the torch of Greek civilization, which affected the nations of the Near and Middle East, and held that important part of Asia against the hordes of barbarism. When the dynasty became effete and fell, Rome was ready to step into its place.

5

The Parthian Empire

For nearly five centuries, from the middle of the third century B.C., the Parthian Empire ruled Persia. For most of this long period it was the leading power of the Middle East and the rival of the Roman Empire. Yet

we know very little about Parthia, except when she is brought into contact with Rome. The Parthian homeland was in Northern Khorasan, and also included the upper Gurgan Valley, where its western boundaries marched with Hyrcania. South of the great range, which runs across Northern Persia, Parthia's northern boundary also marched with Hyrcania for a long distance, its capital, Hecatompylos, lying as far west as the neighbourhood of Damghan.

The Parthians were a nomadic tribe, probably akin to the Turkoman. Their royal house was named after a chief Arsaces. It is possible that this was not a personal name, but was adopted to connect the new dynasty with that of the Achaemenians, for Artaxerxes II was also called Arsaces.

The Parthian Empire rose at the expense of that of the Seleucids, whose provinces they finally conquered after many alternations of fortune. Antiochus the Great was able to drive the Parthian monarch out of Media, to take his capital, and to dictate terms to him, but when the Great Seleucid was finally overthrown by Rome, the rising dynasty firmly seated itself in Northern Persia, and expanded until its frontiers marched with those of Rome.

A century after the defeat of Antiochus by the Western Power, the Parthian monarch dispatched an embassy to Sulla, when that general reached the Euphrates. No results followed, but the act was significant. A generation later the first trial of strength between Parthia and Rome took place. Crassus, to whom was assigned the proconsulate of Syria, had boasted in Rome that he would lead his army to Bactria and India. He was

supported in his plan for an invasion of Parthia by the King of Armenia, who promised him a large force of cavalry and infantry, and advised him to march through hilly Armenia, where the terrain was unsuitable for the Parthian horsemen. Crassus crossed the Euphrates at the head of seven legions and 4,000 cavalry in 53 B.C., and instead of following the advice of the King of Armenia, he struck eastwards across the flat open steppe. The Parthian monarch led an army, composed mainly of infantry, into Armenia to prevent any troops being sent to join Crassus, while his commander-in-chief, with all the mounted troops, advanced to meet the Roman army near Carrhae. The Parthians relied mainly on their light cavalry-men, who were trained to shoot at full gallop, while advancing or retiring, but they also had a force of heavily armed cavalry. At the battle of Carrhae, the Parthians swarmed round the legionaries, keeping out of range of their javelins, and pouring in an incessant storm of arrows. These were the famous tactics referred to by Horace :

> Miles sagittas et celerem fugam
> Parthi (timet).

Crassus ordered his son Publius to make a counter-attack with cavalry, supported by archers and infantry. The light horsemen retreated, firing until the Romans were met by superior numbers of Parthian heavy cavalry, by whom they were annihilated. Night fell, and upon the enemy withdrawing to their distant camp, Crassus retreated to Carrhae. Instead of halting to rest his men and restore their *moral*, he made another night march, during which his troops broke up into a mob, with the

result that Crassus was killed, and most of his troops were either slain or captured. This disaster was a heavy blow to Roman prestige in the East.

The civil war between Caesar and Pompey, and the assassination of Caesar, saved Parthia. The Conqueror of the Gauls was determined to avenge Crassus, and his adherents gave out that it was written in the Sibylline books that, until led by a king, Rome would not conquer Parthia. Caesar, with his genius for war and diplomacy, and his experience of the East, would have conquered Parthia without doubt.

Antony failed to do so in 36 B.C. He marched across Armenia, leaving his siege train to follow, hoping to strike a heavy blow by the surprise of Praaspa, a Parthian fortress to the south of Lake Urumia. But he neglected to allow for Parthian mobility, which resulted in the siege train being overtaken and its escort cut to bits. Finally Antony was forced to retreat with heavy losses, and was glad to escape into friendly Armenia.

The struggle for Armenia was ever the chief cause of hostility between Parthia and Rome. Augustus was strong enough to nominate its king, as were Tiberius and Nero, but yet campaigns with varying success had to be waged to support Roman policy.

In A.D. 115–16 Trajan appeared on the scene, ostensibly in connexion with the Armenian question. Actually he was bent on overthrowing the Parthian Empire. He first settled the Armenian question for the time being by making the country a Roman province. He next invaded Irak, annexing province after province, and finally took Seleucia and Ctesiphon. So secure of

his position did he feel that he led his legionaries to the Persian Gulf, the only occasion on which Roman standards were reflected in its waters.

Trajan was suddenly awakened from his dreams of easy conquest by insurrections in his rear. He quickly realized that he could not hold all his conquests and withdrew, but Adiabene, Irak, and Armenia remained Roman provinces, and his expedition was considered a splendid success.

Other and less successful invasions were made by Rome, but in A.D. 217 Artabanus, the last monarch of the Parthian dynasty, signally defeated a Roman army, and regained most of the provinces annexed by Trajan. The Parthians had run their course and were overthrown by the Persian dynasty of the Sasanians. Before, however, leaving this little-known tribe, which played such a great part, a few lines must be devoted to what we have learned about them. The Parthians remained nomads and governed from a camp. They allowed the subject nations to live their own lives, and were satisfied so long as the tribute was duly paid. Their religion, when they rose to power, was mainly ancestor-worship, Arsaces, in particular, being worshipped as the founder of the state. There was also a profound belief in magic and incantations. Later on the tenets of Zoroastrianism were adopted to some extent.

The Parthians possessed no native literature, but were deeply affected by that of Hellas. A celebrated passage of Plutarch describes that news of the death of Crassus was received while the Parthian Court was enjoying the *Bacchae* of Euripides. The head of the slain Roman was

thrown among the courtiers, and the actors sang the lyric passage :

'We've hunted down a mighty chase to-day,
And from the mountains bring the noble prey.'

Parthian coins, on which we depend to a large extent for our knowledge of the dynasty, bore Greek inscriptions. It remains to add that Persian historians hated the Parthians, whom they refer to as 'Chiefs of Tribes'. Furthermore, to lessen their importance, they reduced the length of their hegemony from five hundred to two hundred and sixty-six years in their annals.

6

The Sasanian Dynasty

The Sasanian dynasty is reverenced by Persians, not merely because of its true greatness, but because it was believed to possess a mysterious Royal Splendour. Moreover, thanks to it, Persia regained her freedom from the heavy yoke of the Parthians. So intense was this feeling of reverence that no successful general or pretender could aspire to the throne with any chance of success, and Persia became weak, partly because of this feeling which prevented the rise of a new and probably more capable family to supreme power.

Ardeshir, the founder of the Sasanian dynasty, was vassal-king of Fars, and rose against Artabanus or Ardawan, the Parthian monarch. Three great battles were

fought, the third, in A. D. 226, being decisive, owing to Ardeshir slaying Ardawan in single combat. The victor not only regained all the provinces of the Persian Empire, but he also embarked on an invasion of India, or, more probably, a raid, but he was induced to spare the country by the offer of 'pearls and gold and jewels and elephants as tribute'.

No sooner was Ardeshir seated firmly upon his throne than he determined to challenge the Roman Empire. He gained a success over the forces of the Emperor Severus Alexander, who divided up his troops into three columns, which were unable to support one another. He aimed more especially at gaining possession of Armenia, and was finally successful. In his domestic policy he was equally successful. He revived the Zoroastrian religion, and used the Magi to support his centralized government. He maintained a standing army, and kept it under officers, who were entirely independent of the satraps or the great feudatories. His maxims were admirable: 'There can be no power without an army, no army without money, no money without agriculture, and no agriculture without justice'. Would that present rulers of Persia would act on these wise and sane principles!

Ardeshir was succeeded by Shapur I, who not only invaded Syria successfully and captured Antioch, but inflicted a staggering blow on the prestige of Rome by capturing the Emperor Valerian. It is true that he was aided by Roman treachery, but commemorated in bas-reliefs and in Persian annals, this feat will never be forgotten. Shapur, too, is famous as the founder of many cities, the best known being Nishapur in north-east

Persia, and Shapur, a few miles to the west of Kazerun. Indeed, he was an exceptionally capable ruler, and according to the Persian legends, he was a most majestic figure, as the bas-reliefs suggest, of a generous character, and beloved by his subjects.

In the years which followed the death of Shapur I, Persia was fortunate in escaping invasion and loss of provinces, not once, but twice. In A. D. 275, Aurelian, after the conquest of Palmyra and the capture of Zenobia, decided to invade Persia, and was setting out on this expedition when he was assassinated. Eight years later Carus invaded Mesopotamia and captured Ctesiphon, but he too was killed, apparently by lightning; and the superstitious legionaries insisted on an immediate retreat. During the reign of Diocletian, the reigning monarch Narses invaded Armenia. Rome immediately took up the challenge, and although unsuccessful at first, finally surprised and annihilated the Persian army, and compelled Narses to cede five provinces beyond the Tigris, and to make that river the boundary instead of the Euphrates. Finally all claims in Armenia were renounced by Persia.

The greatest monarch in the early period of the Sasanian dynasty was Shapur II, who reigned for seventy years. During the period covered by his minority and early manhood, Persia mainly acted on the defensive, but when the young monarch grasped the reins of power, he made a successful expedition in the Persian Gulf, and in revenge for the raids from which his country had suffered, pierced the shoulders of his Arab prisoners, and tied them together with ropes. This brutal treatment

impressed his generation and earned Shapur the title of 'Lord of the Shoulders'.

Shapur was a contemporary of Constantine, whose unwarrantable claims to protect Christians in Persia were keenly resented. The Persian monarch was hesitating whether or no he should invade Syria, when, most fortunately for him, at this juncture, Constantine died. As the Roman Empire was divided among the three sons of Constantine, Shapur felt justified in challenging Constantius by an invasion. However, he raided rather than conquered, and gained no decisive success. He twice besieged Nisibis and twice he failed. Ammianus Marcellinus, the historian, who was a member of its garrison, wrote: 'And Shapur himself, mounted on his charger, and being taller than the rest, led his whole army, wearing, instead of a crown, a golden figure of a ram's head inlaid with jewels.' Here indeed was the pageantry of war!

Shapur persecuted his Christian subjects both because of Constantine's tactless attempt at protecting them, and also because he realized that they looked to the Roman Empire rather than to himself. Moreover, celibacy was antagonistic to the sane Zoroastrian doctrine of 'Be fruitful and multiply', and both monks and nuns were almost extirpated. Until Shapur ended his long reign, there was no relaxation in the persecution the Christians suffered.

While Constantius reigned, Shapur was only opposed to a ruler whose resources were inferior to his own, but in A. D. 363 he was threatened with a serious invasion by Julian, who disposed of the entire resource of the Roman Empire, and was determined to emulate the expedition

of Trajan. Fortunately for Persia Julian lacked tact, and by refusing to pay his Saracen allies not only lost their services but suffered heavy losses through their hostility. Arsaces of Armenia was treated with similar haughtiness, and his contingent ultimately deserted.

Julian, when he finally opened the campaign, marched down the Euphrates with a strong fleet of 1,100 ships carrying provisions and the siege train. Little opposition was offered in the field, but several strong fortresses were left unsubdued in his rear. He crossed the Tigris, which was strongly held, and defeated the Persian army—but he was not strong enough to besiege Ctesiphon. This seems remarkable as he had a veteran army 60,000 strong and a powerful siege battery. The possible explanation is that, as in the case of other fortresses, the Sasanian dynasty had made great strides in the art of fortification, and Ctesiphon was too strong. As Julian was unable to capture the capital or force Shapur to fight a decisive battle, his expedition became a mere raid, and that ultimately an unsuccessful one. He burned his ships and retreated up the Tigris. Before very long he was overtaken by the mobile Persians and attacked, while all supplies were destroyed in front of the slow-moving legionaries. In one of these combats Julian was mortally wounded and died on the field of battle. Jovian was elected his successor, and when Shapur opened up negotiations, he restored the five provinces won by Diocletian; he surrendered Nisibis and Singara, and gave up all claims to Armenia. Thus gloriously for Persia ended the campaigns waged by Shapur, who is known to history by the well-earned title of the 'Great'.

The threat to Persia of the invasions of Trajan and Julian was serious, but the attacks on the eastern frontier by the White Huns were infinitely more dangerous, for, had they been successful, Persia would have been overrun and its civilization almost wiped out. The invading hosts on this occasion were the Ye-tai-li-to, known to the classical writers under the form of Ephthalites or White Huns, and to the Persians as Haytal. This powerful tribe crossed the Oxus about A. D. 425, and moved westwards, ravaging the country far and wide. Persia was then ruled by one of her most popular monarchs, Bahram, a mighty hunter of the wild ass, whose name, *Gur*, became the monarch's sobriquet. When news was received of the invasion, Bahram, despite the remonstrances of his councillors, started off on a hunting expedition to the north-west. But when he was lost to sight, he marched eastwards, collecting forces as rapidly as possible, and upon approaching the enemy, made a night attack. A novel feature of this surprise was to attach skins filled with pebbles to his horses' necks. The noise that resulted stampeded the enemy's horses, and Bahram won a decisive victory, killing the *khan* and capturing immense booty. The Huns fled across the Oxus, but were pursued, were defeated in a second battle, and were forced to sue for peace : not that the menace had disappeared from the north-eastern frontier. Far from it, these nomads constituted the most serious preoccupation of the monarchs of Persia for many years to come.

Two generations after the victory of Bahram Gur, Firuz, the reigning monarch, again attacked the White

Huns. He was drawn by a feigned retreat into a mountain defile, was surrounded, and was forced to surrender. The terms imposed were lenient, a treaty of perpetual peace being stipulated for and homage by prostration. Firuz was determined to avenge his defeat. He again attacked the White Huns, who, on this occasion, lured his troops over a deep trench masked by boughs, with the result that they were ignominiously defeated, Firuz himself being among the slain. Under Kobad, the son of Firuz, the Persian disaster was fully avenged. The campaign lasted from 503 to 513, and resulted in the complete and final overthrow of the White Huns, who thenceforward ceased to be a danger to the Persian Empire.

Kobad ended the long peace with Rome that had lasted for sixty years. He suddenly invaded Roman Armenia, receiving the surrender of Theodosiopolis (the modern Erzerum), and capturing Amida at heavy cost. He was then compelled to hasten to Khorasan to deal with the White Huns, and concluded a seven years' peace with Rome. Later in his reign he again engaged in hostilities with the great western power, but his campaigns were not successful.

Noshirwan, son of Kobad, who ascended the throne in A.D. 531, was the most illustrious monarch of the Sasanian dynasty. Almost his first act was to conclude a peace with Rome, by the terms of which that power paid eleven thousand pounds of gold towards the upkeep of Derbent and other fortresses in the Caucasus. Justinian gained by the treaty, as it left him free to employ his armies under Belisarius in the conquest of Italy and Northern Africa. Noshirwan watched events for six

years, and then realizing that Justinian would be able to attack him with overwhelming forces, once the West was subdued, he suddenly invaded Syria and captured Antioch. Like former Parthian and Persian monarchs, he made no attempt at annexation and merely raided. He ultimately made peace with Rome, by the terms of which he received five thousand pounds of gold as a war indemnity.

But the situation had suddenly changed, as Justinian, thanks to Belisarius, had completed his victorious campaigns in the West by the conquest of Italy, and was not content to rest under the stigma of defeat in the East; in consequence, the treaty was denounced. The fresh trial of strength between the two powers took place in Lazica, the province behind Batum with part of modern Georgia. Noshirwan dreamed of creating a naval base in this wooded country, and of striking a blow at the heart of the Roman Empire by sea. But the distance from his own base made this plan fantastic, and after the campaign had dragged on wearily for seventeen years, he made a second treaty of peace with Rome, giving up his claims on Lazica in return for an annual payment of gold, which he, without doubt, represented to his subjects as tribute.

The fame of Noshirwan as a general rests almost entirely on his successful campaigns against the White Huns, whose territory he invaded, and after inflicting severe defeats, he finally divided it with his new ally the *Il-Khan* of the Turks, who had recently risen to power in Central Asia. He also subdued the Khazars of the Caspian littoral, and even sent a successful expedition to distant Yemen. In his old age Noshirwan again fought with

Rome. He captured Dara, but finally the tide turned, and the aged monarch died before gaining a decisive victory.

The achievements of Noshirwan as an organizer are held to outweigh his military successes. He instituted a carefully graded land-tax in money, he created a regular standing army, and secured efficiency by unwearying vigilance. He also watched carefully over the administration of justice. He reclaimed waste lands, making grants of seeds, implements, and oxen, and he insisted that every man should work and marry. Both mendicancy and idleness were punished by this strenuous monarch. He maintained the safety of the roads, improved communications, and invited men of learning to his court, so much so that Persia became the central mart for the exchange of ideas. Altogether we have a monarch whose brilliant achievements in war were excelled by his justice, his powers of organization, his wide-minded toleration and his sagacity, and the impression produced is of a character of remarkable grandeur.

The last great monarch of the Sasanian dynasty was Khusru Parviz. He came to the throne in A. D. 590, when a successful general, Bahram Chubin, had temporarily usurped the power, but aided by a Roman army he recovered his kingdom. In return, when his benefactor Maurice was murdered in A. D. 602, Khusru invaded the Roman Empire, and his troops captured Dara and Amida, and even plundered villages on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus. But in A. D. 610 Heraclius, who eventually laid low the pride of Persia, was proclaimed Emperor at Constantinople. The Roman Empire had fallen very low, and was fated to fall still lower, as in the following

year Khusru took Damascus and then Jerusalem, carrying off the 'True Cross', an act which moved Christendom to its depths. A haughty letter of Khusru, which re-echoes the famous summons of Sennacherib, has been preserved.

So desperate was the situation that Heraclius determined to flee from Constantinople, but the people exacted an oath that he would not desert them. The loss of the 'True Cross' rallied Christendom, and caused a strong outburst of feeling which united all classes and prepared the way for the successful campaigns which changed defeat into victory. During the next five years Heraclius gave a wonderful exposition of the value of sea-power, which does not appear to have attracted the attention of writers on naval warfare. With Constantinople as his base he first landed at Issus, and marching inland, defeated a Persian army and obtained the first Roman success in the campaign. In the following year he invaded Persia by way of Lazica, advanced through Armenia, and drove the unprepared Great King before him.

In 626 Khusru made an attack on Constantinople with the Avars as allies, but owing to Byzantine sea-power his troops could not cross the Bosphorus, and the attempt ended in disaster. Finally, Heraclius sacked Dastagird, the favourite residence of Khusru. The Great King feared to face the Roman Emperor, and was consequently deposed and put to death.

No monarch looms larger in Persian literature for his magnificence, the beauty of his wife Shirin, the twelve thousand women of his harem, and his riches. At one

time he was no coward, but probably luxury sapped his virility and affected his character adversely.

The terrible campaigns waged almost incessantly exhausted Persia and Rome alike. Persia, ruled by weaklings, was ripe for falling, and in the deserts of Arabia the new power had arisen which was to place the Aryans for long centuries under the yoke of the Semites.

7

Persia as a Province of the Caliphate

The rise of Islam forms the main theme of the volume, uniform with this, on 'Arabia', in which Mr. Hogarth describes the campaigns which brought about the overthrow of the Persian Empire and the capture of Ctesiphon. I propose to deal with them in a few paragraphs. The first campaign was waged in A. H. 12–13 (633–4)[1] against the western provinces under the leadership of Khalid, who captured Hira. Later he marched up the Euphrates and decisively defeated a united force of Persians and Byzantines. Mothanna, who succeeded Khalid, had only 9,000 men, but yet he defeated the Persian armies, until, at the 'Battle of the Bridge', he was attacked by overwhelming numbers and lost very heavily. Nothing daunted, he collected fresh troops, and meeting the enemy close to the site of Kufa, he fully avenged his previous defeat. Meanwhile, the campaign in Syria had been brought to a successful conclusion by the Moslems,

[1] A. H. stands for *Anno Hegirae* or 'The Year of the Migration' (to Medina) in 622. The second date gives the Christian year.

who now organized one great army for the conquest of Persia under Sad. He, in A. H. 14 (636), inflicted a crushing defeat on Persia at Khadisiya, which resulted in the capture of Ctesiphon with wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.

Sad had been anxious to pursue the broken enemy, but Omar, the conquering Caliph, ordered him to consolidate his power in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates before attempting any further advance. Indeed, Omar would have been content to keep the open valleys and to leave the uplands of Persia to the enemy. However, events forced his hand, and the Moslems, after severe fighting, defeated the Persians at Jalola in the foothills of the Zagros, Yezdigird III fleeing panic-stricken during the action. After this victory the Persians retired to the Iranian plateau and left Sad free to complete the subjugation of Irak; Arabistan, then known as Khuzistan, was also annexed. It is to be noted that the Arabs intended to conquer these fertile lands, and to live on them. It was no mere raid, but the determination of a race to seek better conditions. In A. H. 21 (642) the final battle was fought at Nahavand to the south of Hamadan. The Persians, who were numerically much stronger, had entrenched themselves, and hoped to wear out the Arabs, whose supplies ran short. But the hardy warriors, spreading false news of Omar's death, feigned a retreat, and being overtaken in rough ground suitable for their tactics, charged home with irresistible courage and defeated the Persians, whom they slaughtered by tens of thousands in the narrow defiles of the mountains. This victory was the death-blow of the Persian

Empire. The Arab army marched across Persia in every direction and annexed its provinces, Tabaristan alone remaining unconquered for more than a century owing to its pathless forests. As to hapless Yezdigird, he, like the last scion of the Achaemenian dynasty, fled eastwards along the same route, and, like Darius Codomanus, died from an assassin's blow.

Persians execrate Omar, the caliph who conquered them, and refuse to acknowledge the first four caliphs, whom they stigmatize as usurpers. For them the successor of Mohamed is Ali, who was his cousin and son-in-law, married to his daughter Fatima. Mohamed had no sons who reached manhood, and since the connexion of Ali with the founder of Islam was closer than that of any other Moslem, Persians consider Ali and his descendants the twelve *Imams* (or spiritual and temporal leaders) to be the only true successors of the Prophet. Bloody wars have raged between the Persians, known as Shias or 'Factionists' and the Sunnis or 'Traditionists', the latter acknowledging all the Caliphs including Ali. To-day, outside Persia and lower Irak, the Sunnis are in a vast majority and overshadow the Shias. Ali was only Caliph for five years, during which period he was far from well served. His rival was Muavia, the founder of the Omayyad dynasty, whom he fought. But his fanatical soldiers compelled him to accept an arbitration in which he was tricked, and a few years later he was assassinated. Thus passed off the stage a man of noble character and high mental attainments, whose good qualities made him no match for the clever intriguer Muavia, and whose lack of decision was fatal during that period. His son

Hasan was a voluptuary, who soon disappeared into private life. The rights of the family were upheld by his younger brother, Husayn, who was invited by the Kufans to succeed to the Caliphate, and was promised their support. Relying on the assurances given, a little party consisting of thirty horse and forty foot, encumbered with women and children, marched north from Mecca. It was deserted by the fickle Kufans, and on the plain of Kerbela, on the west bank of the Euphrates, was overwhelmed by numbers, Husayn and all the males of fighting age being killed. Annually for ten days a passion play is acted throughout the breadth of the country, and no one who has seen it can fail to realize the intensity of the emotion that the tragedy of Kerbela arises among an essentially excitable people. Added to Ali's undoubted claims to be their patron saint and even more, is the firmly held belief that the *Imam* Husayn married a daughter of the last Sasanian monarch. In other words the *Imams* inherit the Royal Splendour of the Sasanians, and thereby have a double claim on Persians. In doctrines it is difficult to lay down the many differences that exist between the two rival parties. Certainly an important difference is that the Sunni doctors of law have an interpretation of it that is immutable, whereas the Shia divines may modify or interpret the laws anew, and occasionally do so. The fundamental difference is that of race rather than of religion.

The Omayyad dynasty ruled the entire Moslem world upon the abdication of Hasan in A. H. 40 (661), and within two years entered into possession of all its countries. Muavia was a great ruler, and was able to have an oath

of fealty sworn to Yezid as his successor, thereby making the caliphate hereditary.

The Moslems were still a conquering people, and extended the provinces of the Caliphate far and wide. Towards the end of the first century under Welid they penetrated east of the Oxus, the ancient boundary of Persia. Kutayba, who conducted these operations in Central Asia, made Merv his head-quarters, and within a decade carried the arms of Islam throughout the length and breadth of Central Asia and even raided distant Kashgar. A second campaign of greater importance to Persia was that of Yezid, who, in A. H. 98 (716), invaded Gurgan and Tabaristan. In the latter province he was able to penetrate as far as Sari, but he was subsequently lured into an ambush and routed. In Gurgan he besieged the Ruling Prince in a stronghold in the mountains, and when he finally captured it, he was able to fulfil a savage vow by grinding wheat into flour for the army with the blood of his prisoners, thousands of whom he also impaled. It is important to note how long the Caspian provinces, although from north to south by no means wide, were able to maintain their independence, thanks to their thick forests, their abundant rainfall, and their unhealthiness.

What was the position of the conquered Persians under the Moslem yoke? The pride and arrogance of the rude conquerors must have been almost unendurable to the polished Persian grandees, but gradually, to save their lives and property, they became clients of noble Arab families, by whom they were treated with extreme superciliousness, the maxim running: 'Three things only

stop prayer: the passing of a client, an ass, or a dog'. Possibly this acute phase disappeared in a generation or two, and it has to be remembered that the finances of the caliphate were modelled on the Persian system, and the whole administration was pervaded with Persian influence. Contrary to general belief the Zoroastrians were not extirpated. Far from it, for we read of Fars in the tenth century of our era as possessing many fire-temples and of important Zoroastrian families. Probably at first there was much loss of life and confiscation of property, but gradually a *modus vivendi* was introduced which left the Persian nobles free to reassume their superiority over the lower classes, and to live very much as they did before the Moslem conquest. To-day the original Zoroastrians only number ten thousand, two-thirds of whom reside at Yezd and the balance at Kerman. Refugees who fled to India prospered and their descendants are about one hundred thousand strong. As the centuries passed, Persia, although for a time her independence had ceased, asserted her intellectual superiority and her higher civilization over the Arabs, most of whom returned to the nomad life which they had, in some cases, entirely abandoned.

The Omayyad dynasty gradually weakened as the generations passed. Of this state of affairs full advantage was taken to organize a propaganda in favour of the house of Abbas, descended from an uncle of the Prophet. Khorasan became the chief centre for this, and the cause gradually gained strength until in A. H. 129 (747) the black standard of the house of Abbas was raised in this distant but important province. Intrigues were

conducted with consummate skill by Abu Muslim, the chief agent of the party. Thousands swore fidelity to the pretenders, and finally the province rose under Kahtaba, the able Abbasid general who defeated the forces of the Caliphate, and rapidly pursued them across Persia to the neighbourhood of Kerbela, where a decisive victory was won. A second victory on the Great Zab overthrew the Omayyad dynasty, which was almost extirpated by the relentless Abbasids. The inhabitants of Khorasan were mainly instrumental in securing the Caliphate for the Abbasids, serving in their armies, fighting heroically for them, and serving them with rare fidelity and devotion. In a sense the victory thus won may be regarded as a sign of national awakening.

The Omayyad dynasty had ruled over the entire empire of Islam, from Central Asia to Spain, whereas the latter province remained loyal to the fallen family, while Moslem Africa did not entirely acknowledge the Abbasids. In Persia the new dynasty met with some rebellions, more especially after the execution of Abu Muslim, whose power was considered to threaten the new dynasty. Among the leaders of rebellion was a Zoroastrian termed Sindbad, who held the country from Rei to Nishapur. The still independent Prince of Tabaristan also took the field, with the result that that province was at last conquered by the Moslems.

The Golden Age of Islam will ever be associated with Haroun-al-Rashid, whose love of justice and thirst for knowledge are enshrined in the immortal pages of the *Arabian Nights*. Mamum, his son by a Persian wife, was devoted to the arts, sciences, and literature even more

than his father. During his reign they were studied with such thoroughness that, through the vehicle of Arabic, benighted Europe became again aware of the riches of Greek science and philosophy.

8

The Seljuks

The decay of the Caliphate naturally caused the Persians to aim at breaking away and regaining their independence. They had always resented being under the heel of the Arabs, whom they despised from the intellectual standpoint, and the hatred of the Caliph Mutawakkil for the house of Ali must have intensified their feelings, by arousing religious fanaticism. The first dynasty which arose was that of the Tahiri, who ruled in Khorasan from A. D. 820 to 872. The family was indeed of Arab descent, but governed as semi-independent princes for more than half a century.

The rise of the Saffar or 'Coppersmith' dynasty was an event of far greater importance. Its founder Yakub bin Lais, who was a coppersmith, followed a popular road to fame and power in Persia by taking to highway robbery. His generosity and courage soon brought him a large following, and he set out to conquer the surrounding provinces, the capture of Herat and Kerman rewarding his first successful campaigns. He rapidly became a power in Persia, and the Caliph, hoping that he would be defeated, appointed him Governor of Balkh, Tokharistan, and other far distant provinces. Yet everywhere he was

successful, and returning to Persia, he overthrew the Tahirid dynasty. Elated by his many victories, Yakub, in A. H. 262 (875), decided to try conclusions with the Caliph, but was defeated, losing not only most of his men, but also his entire camp. Nothing daunted, he retired to Fars and proceeded to raise a fresh army, but died while engaged in this task. Persians love to dwell on Yakub, whom they regard as the first Persian independent ruler since the fall of the Sasanians. Their affection for the dynasty is exemplified by the charming legend which represents the little son of Yakub as lisping the first Persian verse.

Of greater importance than either of the two preceding dynasties was that of the Samanids, which flourished for a century and a quarter. Its founder was a Persian nobleman of Balkh, who had maintained the old religion, but became a convert to Islam. Saman had four sons who served Haroun-al-Rashid, and were appointed governors of various provinces. The ablest of these sons was Ismail, who carved out an empire, mainly at the expense of Amr-ul-Lais, brother of Yakub, whom he defeated, captured, and sent to Baghdad. Ismail chose Bokhara as his capital, and to him it owes its title of *Sharif* or noble. Its fort, which I visited in 1913, dates back to Ismail, who in its halls gathered round himself historians, poets, and doctors of law, whose writings made Bokhara ' the Horizon of the literary stars of the World '. These monarchs of Central Asia, like the Caliphs, fell under the influence of the virile Turkish slaves, whom they trusted more than their own fellow-countrymen, and promoted to many of the important posts. The

Samanid dynasty decayed very quickly, and was overthrown by the Ilak Khan of a Turkish dynasty. A small dynasty which flourished in the Gurgan district from A. D. 928 to 1042 was known as the Ziyarid. It never played an important part on the stage of Persia, and was more noted for the writings of one of its members than for any other achievement.

Perhaps the most important of the local dynasties was that of the Buwayhids. Sprung from a Persian tribe in Daylam, three brothers about A. H. 320 (932) seized Fars and Kerman. The most capable member of the family was Ahmad, who became so powerful that he entered Baghdad unopposed; and his family retained the power of the Caliphate for about a century, ruling as mayors of the palace under a series of puppet Caliphs. A second capable ruler was Azud-u-Dola, whose Band-i-Amir or 'Amir's Dam', constructed across a river near Shiraz, is responsible for the lines of Moore:

> There 's a bower of roses by Bendemeer's stream,
> And the nightingale sings round it all the day long.

The Buwayhid dynasty became weak, and many of its provinces were wrested from it by the last of these local dynasties.

The dynasty of Ghazna was descended from a Turkish slave of one of the Samanid monarchs, who became commander-in-chief in Khorasan. He subsequently governed Ghazna as did his son. The real founder of the dynasty was Sabaktigin, another slave, who married the daughter of Alptigin, and on this account succeeded to the governorship. This remarkable man extended his petty governor-

ship in every direction, taking Peshawar from the Rajputs on the one side and receiving Khorasan from the Samanid monarch on the other. His successor was Mahmud, one of the greatest figures in Central Asia, whose twelve campaigns in India and iconoclastic zeal earned for him the honoured title of 'Idol-breaker'. He also fought some desperate battles in Central Asia, defeating Ilak Khan, the destroyer of the Samanid dynasty near Balkh. He finally annexed Bokhara, Samarcand, and neighbouring provinces. The successors of Mahmud, generally speaking, occupied themselves with their rich Indian provinces, and neglected their Persian possessions, which were destined to pass into the hands of a new power that was appearing on the eastern horizon, rather more than two centuries after the rise of the Tahiri dynasty.

The coming of the Seljuks swept away the comparatively small dynasties which had ruled Persia, more or less, as independent powers, but yet anxious to be acknowledged by the Caliph. More than this, the Seljuks revitalized Islam and created an empire which included Central Asia on the east and Asia Minor on the west. The Seljuks were Turks by race, and formed a branch of the Ghuzz tribe. Their founder was Tukak, father of Seljuk, who crossed into Transoxiana from Turkestan, and with his tribe embraced Islam. The new-comers soon realized their strength, and under Toghril conquered practically the whole of Persia. Like the Buwayhid conqueror, Toghril visited Baghdad in A. H. 447 (1005). When brought before the Caliph, who wore the mantle of the Abbasids and grasped the staff of Mohamed in his right hand, the nomad chief fell on his face and kissed the

ground. He was then conducted to a throne and was appointed Vice-regent of the Caliphate. After remaining at Baghdad for about a year, Toghril continued his successful campaigns until, in Georgia and Iberia, he met the armies of Byzantium. He even sent an envoy to demand tribute from Constantinople. His successor, Alp Arslan, was also a great warrior, who wisely left the affairs of his great state to Nizam-ul-Mulk, a statesman famous in the east, whose system of accounts is still used in Persia. Under Alp Arslan the boundaries of the empire were extended, the annexation of the Herat and Jand provinces in the east, and the holy cities in Arabia in the west, materially increasing his prestige. In A. H. 464 (1071) he defeated a numerically superior Byzantine army in Asia Minor, capturing the emperor.

The Seljuk empire reached its zenith under Malik Shah. In the west Syria and Egypt were conquered, and Bokhara and Samarcand in the east. Under Nizam-ul-Mulk the internal prosperity of the empire was greater than ever before, and his financial arrangements were so good that, to prove them to his master, he paid the ferrymen on the Oxus by bills on Antioch. Moreover, both he and his master fostered science, founding an observatory at Nishapur, in which Omar Khayyam laboured with other men of science to compute the new era which Malik Shah inaugurated. Among Persians it is to be noted Omar Khayyam is celebrated as a philosopher and scientist, and not as a poet.

Sultan Sanjar was the last Great Seljuk. His successes appeared to be more brilliant than those of his predecessors, and then suddenly he fell. According to the

chronicler, during the forty years of his rule in Khorasan before he ascended the throne, he made nineteen conquests. After he became Great Seljuk his successes continued, although there were risings to be put down in Khwarazm, Samarcand, and elsewhere. But a new dynasty appeared in the horizon. It was founded by a near relation of the Kara Khitai emperor of China, who, collecting a force, gained possession of Chinese Turkestan, and built up a powerful empire. In A. H. 536 (1141) the Kara Khitai invaded the empire of Sanjar. His great army was defeated, and the enemy occupied Merv and Nishapur, but finally returned to Chinese Turkestan. A decade later Sanjar was defeated and captured by the Ghuzz tribesmen. He finally escaped and died heart-broken. I have visited his tomb at Merv.

On the ruins of the Seljuk dynasty arose yet another dynasty in Khwarazm or Khiva. Its founder was cup-bearer of the Great Seljuk, and after his fall the Khwarazm dynasty gradually occupied most of the old Persian Empire. The best-known monarch of this short-lived dynasty was Mohamed Shah, whose career closely resembled that of Sultan Sanjar. At first he conquered provinces in every direction from Balkh to Kerman. His next series of campaigns resulted in the occupation of the western provinces of the Kara Khitai dynasty. He even threatened Baghdad, but an exceptionally heavy fall of snow blocked the passes and saved the Caliphate.

In the history of Persia mention must be made of the Ismailis, who played a large part in Persia and the Near East generally at this period. The political importance of the sect may be traced to the Fatimid dynasty, which

claimed descent from Ali and ruled North Africa, Egypt, and Palestine from the tenth to the twelfth century. The dynasty owed its existence to a subtle propaganda, which, by promising rewards suitable to every type of man, gained adherents by thousands. The Druzes of the Lebanon are followers to the present day of these mediaeval beliefs.

The founder of the Assassins, as they were termed by the Crusaders, who were brought into contact with members of the Syrian branch of the order, was a certain Hasan Sabbah, who preached the Fatimid propaganda in Persia. His chief aim was to take advantage of the weakness of the Central Government and to seize strong fortresses all over Persia as propaganda centres. In A. H. 483 (1090) he seized Alamut in the Elburz range to the north of Kazvin, and this initial success was followed by other seizures, more especially in the province of Kuhistan, now Southern Khorasan. Hasan Sabbah finally broke off from the Fatimid dynasty and organized an order of which he was Grand Master, commonly termed Shaykh-ul-Jabal or 'Chief of the Mountain', which title reached Europe as 'The Old Man of the Mountain'. The hierarchy included Grand Priors with their staffs of *dais* or missionaries, and lowest of all were the famous *Fidais* or 'Devotees', whose fanatical readiness to sacrifice their lives in carrying out assassinations, made the sect feared throughout the Near East. Even our English Prince Edward, afterwards Edward I, was stabbed at Acre in 1272, but according to tradition his consort saved his life by sucking the wound. A graphic description of the Assassins or drinkers of hashish is given

by Marco Polo, who describes the beautiful garden to which the devotees were carried under the influence of hashish to enjoy the delights of an Earthly Paradise. Before these joys palled they were brought back to their barracks and dispatched on a mission, under promise to return to Paradise, dead or alive. Actually but few returned. The fear of assassination gave this pernicious sect great power and influence, and it is believed that Sanjar himself, when marching to attack them, stayed his hand when he saw a dagger fastening a grim warning to a table in his tent, but the Mongol Khans allowed no outsiders about their persons and eradicated the sect in A. H. 654 (1256). In the Khorasan and Kerman provinces a few hundred descendants of the Assassins pay tithes to H.H. the Aga Khan, who is the twentieth-century representative of the ' Old Man of the Mountain '.

9

The Mongol Avalanche

THE history of Central Asia and Persia, with its vast plains suitable for the movement of large bodies of cavalry is, from one point of view, a record of wave after wave of invasion from the East. When the tribes were already partially civilized by having lived in or on the borders of the civilized area, as in the case of the Seljuks, their conquest caused much human suffering and loss of life. In the case of the Mongols they came from the wilds to the north of China, whose ancient civilization had hardly affected them, and without any hatred for the

peoples they attacked, they massacred men, women, and children; they burnt villages and crops, destroyed irrigation works and converted rich countries into howling deserts, leaving nothing but ruins and corpses behind them.

The leader of these devils in human form was Chengiz Khan, who, after experiencing many vicissitudes in his youth, proved himself a great leader in war. He fought the Kin dynasty of China, and wrested many of its fairest provinces from their hands, but, in 1216, he turned his attention to the west. His way was made easy by the recent overthrow of the Kara Khitai dynasty, almost simultaneously with the capture of Samarcand by Mohamed Shah of Khwarazm.

Chengiz set his hordes in motion in A. H. 616 (1219) and defeated Mohamed Shah in a decisive battle near Ush. After this the craven Shah resigned the initiative to the invaders and merely threw strong garrisons into the chief towns, hoping that the Mongols, after loading themselves with booty, would return home. But he was mistaken, for Chengiz intended to conquer Western Asia, and with no field army to fear, dealt with the isolated garrisons without much difficulty. The procedure of the Mongols was to use the able-bodied prisoners to dig approaches, to erect the siege batteries and finally to lead the assault, filling up the ditch, if necessary, with their bodies. Only the artisans were spared. By these methods, the population of the country was systematically exterminated and the Mongols had little anxiety about their lines of communication. There was also more grazing for their flocks and herds.

The siege of Otrar lasted six months, but the garrison of Bokhara broke out. Samarcand was surrendered tamely, but this act of submission did not help to avert massacres and slavery. A famous resistance was offered by Urganj, the capital of Khwarazm, where the Mongols were kept at bay for more than six months. After massacring the population, the waters of the Oxus were diverted on to the site of the city, and thence fell into the old channel of the river which led to the Caspian Sea. Mohamed Shah made no attempt to defend the strong line of the Oxus, but fled, pursued by small columns of the Mongols. He first marched to Balkh, intending to take refuge at Ghazna, but he changed his mind and proceeded westwards to Nishapur, and thence five hundred miles farther west to Kazvin. The Mongol horsemen, with utter contempt for their enemy, pursued as far as Rei, which they captured by surprise. Mohamed was then left to seek refuge in an island off the coast of Mazanderan, where he died, leaving a coward's reputation behind him.

Chengiz carried out his conquests with method. After spending the summer of 1220 in the meadows of Nakhsab, he opened a second phase of the campaign by storming Termiz and razing Balkh to the ground. The invasion of Khorasan followed, Merv, Nishapur and Herat, then great cities, being captured, sacked, and destroyed. The loss of life was stupendous, as the villagers had almost all fled to the cities for protection.

The cowardly Mohamed had a gallant son, Jalal-u-Din, who defied the Mongols through failure and success, and alone dared to face them. He had charged a Mongol

force and broken through it before the invasion of Chengiz, and he had escaped from Urganj before the siege, ridden across the desert and defeated a small Mongol force near Nisa (to the south-west of modern Askabad). He had then proceeded to Nishapur, and, after a short rest, had ridden to Ghazna, moving at a great pace to outdistance a body of Mongol pursuers. At Ghazna he raised a force, and marching north cut up a Mongol detachment a thousand strong. He was speedily attacked by a body of 30,000 cavalry, which had been posted to protect the operations of the main body against movement on his part. After desperate fighting the Persians finally won, but the division of the spoils provoked a quarrel which broke up the force, and as Chengiz was reported to be advancing with his main force on Ghazna, Jalal-u-Din retreated towards Sind. Chengiz pursued him by a series of forced marches and surprised him. The intrepid Sultan made charge after charge, and then mounting a fresh horse jumped into the Indus and swam across it to safety, leaving the Mongols full of admiration for the valour of their adversary. Chengiz, after driving off his only serious enemy, returned to Central Asia, where he remained for over a year, and then moved slowly back to Tartary.

We must now return to the two Mongol divisions which captured Rei and had pursued Mohamed to the Caspian Sea. They dealt in the Mongol fashion with Kum, Kazvin, and Zenjan, but permitted the Tabrizis to ransom themselves. They then grazed their horses on the famous Moghan plain, and continuing northwards, ravaged the country up to Tiflis. They cut the Georgian

army to pieces in an ambush, penetrated to Darband or Derbent, and moving westwards invaded Russia. The Muscovite princes collected a large force, but were defeated, and the victors feasted on a platform of boards which was laid on the vanquished leaders and slowly crushed them to death. The Mongols finally crossed the Upper Volga, where they defeated a force of Bulgars and then rejoined the main body in Tartary, after performing a most wonderful military exploit. To summarize, in Northern Persia practically every great centre was captured and its inhabitants were massacred. In a contemporary history we read that 'not one-thousandth part of the population escaped'. Most fortunately, Central and Southern Persia escaped these massacres.

After the death of bloody Chengiz Khan, his successor, Ogotay, projected three great expeditions: (*a*) against Northern China; (*b*) against Central and Southern Russia; and (*c*) against Jalal-u-Din; the latter alone concerns us, and we may revert to his adventures. After escaping across the Indus, he was rejoined by some two thousand of his troops, who were destitute of almost everything, but thanks to their courage, they were soon rearmed and re-equipped. Jalal-u-Din avoided the pursuing Mongols by marching southwards towards Delhi, where it was intimated by the 'Slave King' that he had better proceed to Multan. Having been joined by some reinforcements, he invaded Sind, but a confederacy of Indian princes was formed to drive him out, and he consequently decided to return to Persia. In A. H. 620 (1223) he traversed Makran, more or less as Alexander the Great had done, and, like him, he lost the

greater part of his army, finally reaching Kerman with a diminished force. From this city he marched to Fars, where he married the daughter of the Atabag Sad.

After establishing his authority in Persia, Jalal-u-Din, instead of preparing to meet the Mongols, marched to attack the Caliph Nasir. He failed to take Shuster, but drew the Caliph's troops into an ambush and pursued them to the gates of Baghdad, which city he was not strong enough to capture. He then marched north, subdued Azerbaijan and Georgia, capturing Tabriz and Tiflis.

In A. H. 625 (1228), the Mongols, who had been beaten at Damghan in the previous year, appeared in great force at Isfahan. The intrepid Jalal-u-Din broke the left wing of the enemy and thought that the day was his, but his own left wing was broken, and he only escaped by cutting his way through the Mongols, who finally retreated with heavy losses.

Three years later Jalal-u-Din, who had meanwhile again defeated the Georgians, was surprised by the Mongols in the Moghan Plain and barely escaped. This ended his brilliant career; he was thenceforward a refugee and was finally killed by a Kurdish bandit. Had Jalal-u-Din possessed the qualities of a statesman in addition to his genius for war, he would surely have been able to organize an army capable of defeating the Mongols, who were numerically weak and fought thousands of miles from their base.

In A. H. 649 (1251), Hulagu Khan, a younger brother of Mangu the Khakan or Chief Khan, was appointed to crush the Assassins and overthrow the Caliphate. Destined

to be a great conqueror and the founder of the Il-Khan dynasty of Persia, Hulagu moved in a most leisurely manner, and did not reach Persia for nearly four years after his appointment. He found the Assassins powerless to resist him. They possessed no field army and their devotees had no chance of striking at him. Hulagu first stormed Khaf and Tun, and massacred the entire population. The Grand Master realized the position, and surrendered his fortresses and eventually himself, hoping for favourable terms. The famous sect was thus eradicated with the utmost ease, and to-day only a few families in the provinces of Kerman and Khorasan recall the erstwhile famous Assassins.

The overthrow of the Caliphate was almost as easy as that of the Assassins, mainly owing to the despicable character of Mustasim Billah. Instead of profiting by the delay granted through Hulagu's love of ease and pleasure, he took no adequate steps to organize an army; above all he refused to unlock the doors of his treasury. Had he been a capable ruler he could probably have beaten off the Mongols who were operating at an enormous distance from their homeland. Confident of success, Hulagu sent one army from the north with instructions to attack Baghdad from the west, while he marched with the main force from his base at Hamadan, making for the same objective, the flight of the Caliph being prevented by these combined manœuvres. Little resistance was offered and Baghdad was taken. Its sack lasted for a week and raised a cry of horror throughout prostrate Islam. One million of its inhabitants are said to have been massacred, and the loss to civilization from

the slaughter of the learned men and their disciples, from the destruction of libraries and buildings, and all the accumulated objects of art was terribly heavy. The Arabic language suffered almost equally, as it lost its proud position analogous to that of Latin in Europe, and gradually declined in importance. The Caliph was done to death by being tied up in a sack and then trampled on by horses, Mongols avoiding the actual shedding of royal blood. In Longfellow's 'Kambalu', the Caliph is described as being locked up in his own treasure-house to die of hunger, in sight of his hoards of gold.

After the capture of Baghdad, Hulagu marched westwards and captured Aleppo. In 1260, his army was defeated by the Mamelukes of Egypt, who thereby saved what was practically the last refuge of Moslem culture. Hulagu died in A. H. 663 (1265) at Maragha, where he built a great observatory, the ruins of which are still visible. His chief wife was a Nestorian Christian of the Kerait tribe, which fact made him favour Christians to the great joy of the Pope. Hulaku does not appear to have possessed any great qualities, and his extraordinary successes, which profoundly affected the course of the world's history, were due rather to the weakness of the Grand Master of the Assassins and of the Caliph than to his own martial aptitude.

Hulagu had ruled as undisputed King of Persia, and his successor Abaga succeeded him, but delayed the assumption of the full royal state until Khubilay, the *Khakan*, had confirmed it. One of his earliest acts was to marry a daughter of the Emperor Michael Paleologus. Furthermore, he dispatched letters to the Pope and the kings of

Europe, proposing to attack the Moslems and expel them from the Holy Land. In this connexion we still have the letter of Edward I of England to Abaga, in which the love of Abaga for the Christian faith is extolled, and vague reference is made to coming operations in Palestine. Actually Abaga was too late to secure effectual Christian co-operation, as his reign coincided with the disappearance of the last fragments of the Crusaders' dominion in Syria. Possibly had he been able to defeat the Mamelukes, the result would have been different.

The successor of Abaga was his brother, who had been baptized a Christian under the name of Nicolas, but who proclaimed himself a Moslem on his succession under the name of Ahmad. The Mongol nobles, however, resented the favour shown to Moslems, and in 1284 conspired to set Arghun, Abaga's eldest son, on the throne. Ahmad fled, but was captured and put to death by having his back broken. It is interesting to note that, only a few years later, in 1295, Baydu, the last of the heathen Il-Khans, was deposed and put to death, mainly because he was hostile to Islam and favoured Christianity.

Ghazan Khan, who reigned from 1295 to 1304, was the Great Il-Khan. Upon his accession he declared himself a Moslem and repudiated the suzerainty of the heathen *Khakan*, whose titles were removed from the coinage to make way for the Moslem confession of faith. Ghazan invaded Syria, and at first was successful, defeating the Mamelukes and capturing Damascus. He received the submission of the city and issued a proclamation that no harm would be done to any one. Although he was unable to carry out these good intentions entirely, the

change for the better that Islam brought about in the behaviour of the Mongols is most noticeable. In a later campaign the Mamelukes defeated and cut to pieces the Mongol army.

But it is for his reforms, his buildings, and his endowments that Ghazan takes a high place in the temple of fame. He swept away the abuses of irregular taxation and perquisition, instituted a new survey, and posted a copy of the taxes to be paid by each village in the mosque. He also purified the administration of justice, encouraged agriculture, set up a standard of weights and measures, and probably unconsciously imitated Noshirwan in his attempt to relieve the down-trodden peasantry by every possible means.

He adorned his capital Tabriz with a mosque, two colleges, a hospital, a library, and an observatory. He also engaged the most celebrated professors and men of science with liberal salaries to teach and work in his foundations, to which he assigned lands for the cost of supplies and upkeep. Nor were the students forgotten. Indeed, the whole scheme was thought out with extraordinary thoroughness, and it is sad that, owing to his degenerate successors, Persia relapsed into anarchy and that the good intentions of Ghazan were frustrated. Like his predecessors, Ghazan Khan exchanged letters with the monarchs of Christendom, and Edward I of England accredited Geoffrey de Langley to the Persian Court. The original roll showing the itinerary of the mission and giving an account of their expenditure is extant.

While the empire of the Il-Khans was falling to pieces,

local dynasties again came into existence. The most important was that of the Jalayr, the founder of which, after ruling in the name of three puppet Il-Khans, assumed sovereign functions and ruled from Baghdad. His descendant fled before the invasion of Tamerlane, and was defeated and succeeded by the Kara Kuyunlu or 'Black Sheep' dynasty.

Another dynasty was that of the Muzaffarids, which ruled Southern Persia from 1313 to 1393. Shah Shuja, who captured Tabriz and more distant Baghdad, is mainly known to fame as the patron of Hafiz. Sultan Ahmad built a mosque at Kerman. I discovered a beautiful stone pulpit with an inscription in his honour at the old capital of the Kerman province. The family was exterminated by Tamerlane.

The race of the *Il-Khans* was run. For more than a century they had ruled Persia, firstly as alien pagan conquerors, but as time passed and generations were born and brought up in Persia, they gradually became Persianised, adopted Islam, and were accepted by the people as their rightful monarchs.

10

Tamerlane

TAMERLANE, the next great conqueror to appear on the stage of Central Asia, has impressed mankind in Asia and Europe perhaps more than any other great soldier. By descent he belonged to the Barlas, a Turkish tribe, and lived at Kesh, the modern Shahr-i-Sabz. By displaying

brilliant military qualities, Amir Timur, as he was termed in Central Asia, gradually conquered the neighbouring provinces. Not that he escaped numerous vicissitudes, as at one time he was pursued into the desert of Khwarazm and was seized by brigand Turkoman. It was during this period of wandering that he acquired his sobriquet of Timur *Lang* or 'Lame', which, in European languages, appears as Tamerlane. While roaming in Southern Afghanistan he was appealed to by the Prince of Sistan, whose subjects had rebelled. Throwing himself with zeal into the task, he captured three of the seven forts held by the rebels. The latter then submitted to their Prince, and pointed out that if he captured more of the forts Sistan would lie at his mercy. The Prince, won over by this weighty argument, attacked Tamerlane, supported by his erstwhile rebellious subjects, and although the latter broke the centre of the Sistan army he received an arrow in the foot, which was permanently injured.

Tamerlane had conquered Transoxiana and Eastern Turkestan by 1380, in which year he commenced his famous campaigns in Persia, his first objective being Khorasan. Herat submitted, but the celebrated natural fortress of Kalat-i-Nadiri, which I visited when Consul-General at Meshed, resisted all attacks, and Tamerlane had to admit defeat. However, in the end plague broke out, and the fortress surrendered to a blockading force. Marching southwards Tamerlane invaded Sistan, then a rich and prosperous province. His siege of Zaranj, generally known as the City of Sistan, is graphically described, and we read how the brave townspeople attacked again

and again in spite of heavy losses, and how they were finally massacred. To-day the ruins of this once great city are utterly lifeless and desolate, and there is nothing bigger than a village in the whole district of Sistan, that was once celebrated for its wealth, its buildings, and its learned men. Tamerlane made Samarcand his capital, and from it he led his army on a series of brilliant and uniformly successful campaigns. In the year following the conquest of Sistan, he marched farther afield. His first objective was Astrabad. He then subdued the province of Mazanderan, and advanced as far as Rei and Sultania, capturing both these royal cities. Two years later Tamerlane occupied Azerbaijan, overran Georgia and sacked Van, driving the Prince of the ' Black Sheep ' dynasty from his capital. Isfahan was his next objective. This city surrendered, but a mob massacred the garrison of Tartars, who were avenged by the execution of 70,000 citizens. Shiraz opened its gates in haste to the invincible army of Tamerlane. Some six years later the Great Conqueror again marched into Southern Persia, where Shah Mansur of the Muzaffar dynasty led a force of 4,000 horsemen, clad in armour, against his army. For a while he carried all before him, and even struck Tamerlane himself, but he was finally overcome and killed. From Fars Tamerlane's next objective was Baghdad, which submitted. Marching northwards he besieged the fort of Takrit, held by a noted bandit, and believed to be impregnable from its situation on a cliff. Tamerlane, however, set thousands of men to work, who mined the solid rock with such success that many of the towers fell. Finally, the entire garrison was captured, and the fame

of Tamerlane rose even higher from his success in the most celebrated siege of the period.

Twice Tamerlane invaded Russia, Moscow being sacked during the second campaign. India, too, was invaded and the wealth of Delhi was secured.

Tamerlane was now nearly seventy, but upon his return from India, he fought the greatest of all his campaigns. He invaded Asia Minor, took Aleppo and Damascus, but made no attempt to invade Egypt. He realized that he had still to meet a state of equal standing to his own, and that the Osmanli Turks were opponents of quite a different calibre to the warriors of Central Asia or Persia. Sultan Bayazid enjoyed immense prestige from his victories over the Serbians and their Christian allies at Kosovo ; and, later, he had routed the chivalry of Europe at Nicopolis. But he was now reputed to have grown indolent, and worse, he was notoriously avaricious and mean. The decisive battle was fought at Angora. Bayazid brought his troops tired and thirsty to the battlefield, and some of his contingents deserted him, owing to Tamerlane's active agents who bought their services. The Janissaries and Christian contingents fought desperately, but were finally overwhelmed by superior numbers, and Bayazid was captured. This was the last and most glorious campaign of Tamerlane.

We fortunately possess a contemporary picture of the Great Conqueror, drawn by a Castilian knight, who was sent as ambassador to the court of Samarcand. Describing the reception of the embassy, he writes: 'The lord was seated cross-legged, on silken-embroidered carpets, amongst round pillows. He was dressed in a robe of

silk, with a high white hat on his head, on the top of which there was a spinel ruby, with pearls and precious stones round it. . . . Three secretaries, who stood before the lord, came and took the ambassadors by the arms, and led them forward until they stood together before the lord. This was done that the lord might see them better; for his eyesight was bad, being so old that the eyelids had fallen down entirely.'

Tamerlane died shortly afterwards, after he had started on an expedition against the empire of China. He is buried at Samarcand, the cenotaph consisting of a great block of black jade, and I count it a special privilege to have visited the tomb of this great maker of history.

Of the sons of Tamerlane, the greatest was Shah Rukh, who, from Herat, ruled over Persia and Central Asia for nearly half a century. The splendid buildings erected by himself, his wife, Gauhar Shad Aga, and his ministers are still standing, albeit in many cases their casing of beautiful tiles has disappeared. The court of Shah Rukh was celebrated for the galaxy of men of learning and science which gathered there. Embassies, too, were dispatched to China and to the Deccan, the records of which are still extant, including letters written by Shah Rukh himself.

This great monarch was succeeded by Ulugh Beg, whose buildings at Samarcand challenge our admiration even in decay. He was noted for his love of astronomy, and the tables which were drawn up under his orders are held to be the best and most complete which have reached Europe from the East. As a monarch, he was

unfortunate, for a nephew seized his son Abdul Latif. He defeated him and rescued his son, but the latter revolted and murdered his father in 1449. At this time Herat was sacked by the Turkoman and Samarcand by the Uzbeg tribesmen.

The later monarchs of the house of Tamerlane sat insecurely on their thrones. They quarrelled among themselves, and are chiefly deserving of renown for the wonderful era of art and literature brought into existence through their encouragement. Baber, the founder of the Moghul empire of India, falls outside the scope of this brief history, but it is thanks to his immortal *Memoirs* that we know so much about Sultan Husayn, the patron of Jami the poet, of Mirkhond the historian, and of Behzad the painter, to name three of the great names which adorned this brilliant age.

The dynasty of Tamerlane had run its course, and was gradually succeeded in Persia by the Ak-Kuyunlu or 'White Sheep' dynasty, which was a rival to, and finally overcame the 'Black Sheep' dynasty referred to above. The great member of the 'White Sheep' was Uzun or 'tall' Hasan, who overthrew Abu Said, the successor of Ulugh Beg, and became the virtual ruler of Persia and Mesopotamia. Uzun Hasan is well known to us, thanks to the efforts made by Venice to induce him to attack the Turks, who, by the capture of Constantinople in 1453, were threatening Europe as she had not been threatened since the Mongol invasion. Uzun Hasan actually took the first step, realizing that, without artillery, he could gain no permanent success against the Turks. His overtures were most favourably received,

and the Doge dispatched an ambassador to his court. Uzun Hasan was married to Theodora, a daughter of Calo Johannes, one of the last emperors of Trebizond, and her nephew, Caterino Zeno, was chosen to represent Venice and persuade the 'White Sheep' ruler to attack the conqueror of Constantinople by land, while the Venetians operated on the coast of Karamania. Uzun Hasan ravaged part of Asia Minor, but was defeated by the Turks, who in the following year (1473) attempted to invade Persia, but were repulsed at the Euphrates. Uzun Hasan followed them up, but was again defeated. After these experiences, he did not attempt a fresh invasion of the Osmanli provinces. The Venetians, on their side, made great efforts to unite Christendom, but failed, and it was left for a new dynasty to intensify the national enmity between the Persian and Turkish empires.

II

The Safavi Dynasty

The ancient royal family of the Sasanians disappeared with the Arab conquest. But as Persians believed that the Imams were descended on the distaff side from a daughter of Yezdigird III, they were ready to unite in loyalty to their descendants. The Safavi dynasty, the first national dynasty to rule Persia since the fall of the Sasanians, traced its descent from the seventh Imam. The family lived at Ardebil and was deeply venerated, especially one member, Safi-u-Din, or 'Purity of the Faith'. From this title the dynasty took its name of Safavi.

Tamerlane visited Sadr-u-Din, son of Safi-u-Din, and offered the saint a boon. The latter requested the release of Turkish prisoners from Diarbekir, and the captives and their families, after recovering their liberty, formed a party for the saint, emigrating by thousands into neighbouring Gilan. Uzun Hasan received Junayd, the head of the family, with honour, and gave him his sister in marriage. Junayd's son Haydar married Martha, a daughter of Uzun Hasan by the Greek princess. She bore him three sons, the youngest of whom was Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavi dynasty. Few, if any Persians are aware that their favourite monarchs were descended on the distaff side from the Christian emperors of Trebizond. Shah Ismail owed his rise to a band of fanatically devoted followers, and his first exploit was the capture of Baku. This success increased his following, and he was able to defeat Alwand, Prince of the Ak-Kuyunlu dynasty. After this important success he marched on Tabriz, which opened its gates, and was proclaimed Shah.

It cannot be too clearly realized that the rise of this family was viewed with intense emotion owing to the Persian love for the house of Ali. His followers viewed Ismail as Priest and King, and would often fight without armour so as to win martyrdom. It is, however, noteworthy that it was the support of seven Turkish tribes and not the Persians who secured the throne for Ismail. Known as Kizilbash or 'Red heads', from wearing a scarlet head-piece, they played the leading part on the stage of Persia for many generations, and one of them, the Kajar, has produced the present reigning dynasty.

The youthful Ismail was a great warrior, possessed of

extraordinary activity. He soon annexed the territories of the wide-spreading Ak-Kuyunlu dynasty, Baghdad, Mosul, and Diarbekir, all falling to him.

At this period Tabriz was the capital, situated on the edge of Persia proper. The rising power of the Uzbegs took advantage of the absence of the Shah to occupy Khorasan, in which connexion Meshed, its capital, lies about 1,000 miles to the east of Tabriz. Shah Ismail dispatched an embassy to Shaybani Khan, the chief of the Uzbegs, but he contemptuously replied by sending Ismail a staff and begging bowl, with the message that if he had suffered any loss in his possessions it was easy to restore them. The Shah, enraged at this slighting reference to the origin of his family, retorted by sending a spindle and reel, to signify that words were women's weapons.

The Persian army, almost entirely composed of mounted troops, moved rapidly and met the Uzbegs in the neighbourhood of Merv, where, by means of a successful ambush, 17,000 Turks and Persians utterly defeated 28,000 Uzbegs. Shaybani Khan was killed. In accordance with the barbarous custom prevailing at the period, his head was cut off and mounted to serve the victor as a drinking cup. This victory resulted in the occupation of Balkh and Herat, and Shah Ismail returned home in triumph, leaving a large force to conduct further operations against the Uzbegs, which were, however, generally speaking, unsuccessful, Baber, the ally of Persia, being driven out of Central Asia, owing to the fanatical hatred of the Sunni population for the Shia Persians. Even the author of the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, who was Baber's cousin,

wrote: 'The Uzbeg infantry began to shoot their arrows from every corner, so that the claws of Islam twisted the hands of heresy and unbelief, and victory declared for the true faith.'

Most unfortunately for Shah Ismail, Turkey was ruled at this period by a great conqueror, Selim the Grim. Determined to crush this band of heretics, as he regarded the new power, he commenced operations by ordering the extirpation of all Shias in his territories, and succeeded in killing forty thousand out of a total of seventy thousand. In addition to the all-powerful influence of fanaticism, it was known at Constantinople that Shah Ismail had dispatched envoys to Egypt and even to distant Hungary.

The Turkish invasion found Ismail unprepared to meet it. His best troops were in Central Asia, and consequently he decided to await the Turks at Chaldiran, a plain to the east of Lake Urumia, which was suitable for his mounted troops, while it covered Tabriz. The Turks were organized as a regular force 120,000 strong, mainly composed of cavalry, but including several regiments of musketeers and a powerful field artillery. Ismail's force, consisting entirely of cavalry, was 60,000 strong. His plan was to attack both flanks, and this suited the Turks excellently, as they were able to utilize their formidable musketeers and still more formidable artillery. The Shah charged the left flank of the Turks and was successful until the Janissaries were brought up and threw the Persian horsemen into confusion. He is portrayed as cutting down the Aga of the Janissaries in the great picture gallery at Isfahan, and is reputed to have performed prodigies of valour. But his horse fell wounded,

he was nearly captured, and when he remounted he fled, followed by his horsemen.

Tabriz surrendered, but the defeat was not a crushing blow, as the Turks mutinied, and Selim was obliged to evacuate Tabriz and to content himself with the annexation of Kurdistan and Diarbekir. He seized, but failed to hold, Georgia. The remainder of Ismail's reign was passed in raids rather than warfare, and when he died in 1524, he was deeply lamented by all his subjects. Thanks to the Venetian traveller Angiolello, we have a delightful sketch of the monarch who was 'fair, handsome, and very pleasing; as brave as a game-cock, and stronger than any of his lords'.

Ismail's eldest son was but a boy of ten when he ascended the throne, and like his father, had to face the Uzbegs to the east and the far more formidable Turks to the west. With the Uzbegs his troops were successful in the field, but their terrible raids were not stopped thereby, and they continually threatened the security of Khorasan.

Far more serious was the Turkish invasion under Sulayman the Magnificent. The Persians played an entirely defensive rôle, leaving Tabriz and Baghdad to the enemy, and laying waste the country.

> As when the Tartar from his Russian foe,
> By Astracan, over the snowy plains
> Retires, or Bactrian Sophi, from the horns
> Of Turkish crescent, leaves all waste beyond
> The realm of Aladule, in his retreat
> To Tauris or Casbeen.

Sulayman, like his father, took Tabriz. He pressed on to Sultania, from which city he turned westwards and

captured Baghdad. Tahmasp, unable to meet the enemy in the field, contented himself with following up the retreating enemy, but suffered much loss in doing so. Altogether he played an inglorious part.

Hostilities between Turkey and Persia had been carried on intermittently ever since the foundation of the Shia dynasty. The Turks were undoubtedly the more powerful of the two states, but Persia was too poor a country to recompense them for the efforts expended. Also the force of the fanatical feeling against the Shias had probably weakened as the years passed. In 1554 advantage was taken of this changed feeling to make a peace, which was concluded not by a treaty but by a letter from Sulayman, who probably refused to regard the Shah as his equal. In return for the benefits of this compact, Tahmasp betrayed Bayazid, who had fled to his Court, after rebelling unsuccessfully against his terrible father. The price paid for this detestable piece of treachery was 400,000 gold pieces.

Among the great Elizabethans and the first English explorer by land was Anthony Jenkinson. Associated with Chancellor in the discovery of the White Sea, and the lucrative trade with Russia that it opened up, he succeeded the latter in the post of Captain-general of the Muscovy Company's fleet. Ivan the Terrible, realizing the value of the Englishman, dispatched him as his ambassador to Bokhara, where he accomplished his mission with much credit. In 1561 he headed another mission, the object of which was to trade with Persia across Russia. As that power had only just acquired control of the Volga and piracy was rampant, the scheme was truly a great adventure, worthy of the lion-hearted Englishman.

Fortune favoured him, for after successfully weathering a terrible storm in the Caspian Sea, he landed a little to the north of Baku, and proceeding to the capital of the province, was fortunate enough to find favour with its governor, Abdulla Khan. He thence set out for the court, crossing the Kur and passing through Ardebil, where he visited the tomb of Shah Ismail.

Kazvin was then the capital, and the intrepid Englishman obtained an audience of Tahmasp, to whom he delivered a letter from Queen Elizabeth and a present. He made a speech, saying that he was of the 'famous Citie of London', and sent 'for to treate of friendship and free passage of our merchants and people, to repair and traffic within his dominions'. All went well until, having acknowledged that he was a Christian, the Shah exclaimed, 'Oh thou unbeleeuer, we have no neede to haue friendship with the unbeleeuers'. The Englishman, being dismissed, was escorted from the palace, sand being thrown on the places polluted by his footprints. It might have gone hard with him, but for the support of Abdulla Khan, who was opposed to his execution by the Shah, and pointed out the impolicy of such a step. Jenkinson reached Moscow safely, with a rich cargo of raw silk and dye-stuffs, brocades and jewels. This trade was continued, six journeys in all being undertaken. Finally, in 1581, losses through storms and acts of piracy convinced the Muscovy Company that the attempt must be abandoned. All honour to the Englishmen, through whose initiative and daring the horizon of their fellow-countrymen, including that of Milton and Marlowe, was widened. Tahmasp was no great ruler, and upon his

death there was internal trouble, partly due to the Kizilbash tribes usurping the authority of the state, but this gloomy night ushered in a brilliant dawn.

The infant son of Mohamed Khudabanda, an unpopular and incapable Shah, was appointed Governor of Khorasan. His guardians were the chiefs of two Turkish tribes, and when the baby became a boy he was nearly killed in a skirmish between them. Such was the up-bringing of Shah Abbas, destined to go down in history as Persia's greatest monarch. Mohamed Khudabanda was a weakling, and the Amirs of Khorasan proclaimed Abbas as Shah. In the civil war that ensued, the party of Abbas seized Kazvin. A proclamation was then issued that the houses and land owned by soldiers would be confiscated unless they appeared in person to establish their rights. The army immediately deserted Khudabanda, who shortly afterwards disappeared, and Abbas killed his guardian, the chief of the Ustajlu, and thereby seized the reins of power. His position with the Uzbeg raids to the east, and the Turks menacing him to the west, was one of great weakness. Fortunately the Turks were not aggressive, and in 1590 a peace was concluded with them, Tabriz, Shirwan, Georgia, and Luristan being ceded to the Sunni power.

The Uzbeg empire was at its zenith at this period. Eastwards it included part of modern Chinese Turkestan, and southwards Badakshan and Tokharistan. Its power was now felt in Khorasan, which province was reduced to a pitiable condition, Herat, Meshed, and Nishapur all falling into the hands of the savage tribesmen, who massacred and looted to their hearts' content. The

Shah was for long delayed by illness, but finally he gained a decisive victory over the invaders in 1597, close to Herat, after which the raids ceased for many years.

As a protection to the northern frontiers of Khorasan, tribes of Kurds were settled in the Darragaz, Kuchan, and Bujnurd districts, and, generally speaking, they have protected Khorasan by their hostility to the Turkoman, not that they entirely spared the property of the less virile Persians. To-day these colonies are flourishing, and I have stayed with their chiefs on more than one occasion.

The appearance of the first English knights in Persia, the forerunners of many accomplished travellers of different European nations, was an event of some importance. Sir Anthony Sherley had already won fame as the leader of an expedition to the Spanish main. Accompanied by Sir Robert Sherley, his brother, and twenty-six retainers, he reached Kazvin in 1598. Upon the return of the Shah from his victory over the Uzbegs, they presented themselves as desirous of entering the service of such a famous monarch. They gave rich presents, and the Shah, who was flattered, bestowed royal gifts upon them. Indeed their arrival was most opportune. The Shah had realized that his army, consisting entirely of Kizilbash horsemen who only obeyed their chiefs, would never be able to defeat the Turks. He therefore decided to reduce the tribal contingents to thirty thousand, and to organize a force of ten thousand cavalry and twelve thousand infantry, to be paid and officered by the Crown. He was quick to see the value of the Sherleys, who had brought a cannon-founder in their party, and before very

long, thanks to our fellow-countrymen, batteries of artillery and regiments of infantry were formed. To complete his military independence, Abbas formed a new tribe, termed Shah Savan or 'Friends of the Shah'. Thousands of men joined it, and thus released the Shah from dependence on the turbulent and domineering Kizilbash.

Shah Abbas wisely waited until his regular army was trained before attempting to recover the provinces he had been obliged to cede to Turkey. He moved rapidly on Tabriz, which surrendered, and after eighteen years once again became part of the Persian empire; Erivan was also captured after a siege lasting six months. In due course of time a Turkish army one hundred thousand strong appeared on the scene, which outnumbered the sixty-two thousand Persians. Abbas detached a considerable force of cavalry to make a wide détour and appear on the rear of the enemy, and by opening out to create the impression that it was the main body. This ruse succeeded, the Turks detaching a large body to meet the supposed attack. While this difficult operation was being carried out, the Persian main body charged home, and the enemy fled, losing 20,000 men. The fruits of this decisive victory included Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Baghdad, Mosul, and Diarbekir; but of far greater importance was the feeling that Persia, thanks to the improvement of her troops, could defeat a powerful Turkish army. Religious feeling, too, was deeply moved by the recovery of Kerbela and Najaf, centres sacred to the Shia sect. After this victory hostilities continued for some years, without achieving anything of special

importance, but the prestige of the Safavi dynasty and the *moral* of its supporters continued to increase.

The fame of Shah Abbas rests on his genius for administration quite as much as on his successful campaigns. Like Darius, he made great efforts to improve the communications, and most of the bridges and caravanserais in Persia, now alas! in a dilapidated condition, date from his reign. Even to-day his *sang farsh* or 'stone pavement' may be traced in Gilan and Mazanderan.

One mark of his genius was the choice of Isfahan, situated in the centre of Persia, as his capital. There, on the banks of almost the only river of the plateau, splendid palaces were built, approached by beautiful double avenues of Oriental planes and stately bridges. Even to-day the magnificent Royal Square and the surrounding buildings challenge the deep admiration of the traveller. The Shah transported five thousand families of Armenians from Julfa on the Aras to found a new Julfa on the Zenda Rud, and this colony throve and helped to increase the trade of Persia with the outer world. Europeans were also encouraged to settle in Persia and help towards the progress of the country. Realizing the need of a united people, the wise Shah encouraged pilgrimages to Meshed, the shrine of the Imam Riza. The monarch made several pilgrimages to the sacred city, on one occasion walking the entire distance of 800 miles.

In his domestic life he was seen at his worst, putting his sons to death through jealousy or fear of being supplanted by them. On the other hand, it is reasonable to suppose that these terrible acts were not committed

lightly, but to ward off some real or imagined danger to himself. In the East, such domestic tragedies are the rule rather than the exception, and cannot be judged from the standpoint of the modern European.

Shah Abbas, after a glorious reign of forty-two years, died in 1629, and we may leave his character to his countrymen, who loved and respected him more than any other Shah who reigned in Persia.

12

The Ōverthrow of the Safavi Dynasty by the Afghans

Polygamy, which is suitable to mankind in its early stages, involves many disadvantages, among them being lack of affection of the children for the father. The mothers and their families intrigue against one another, regarding the head of the family as a master rather than a husband or parent. As a result the father, on his side, regards his sons as they grow up in the light of possible supplanters, and consequently as enemies. Shah Abbas, who destroyed his own family, also ensured the ultimate destruction of the Safavi dynasty by not permitting the princes of the blood to be trained to arms, as had been the invariable custom. They were henceforth brought up in the *anderun* or 'Women's Apartments', with eunuchs as their governors. They thus tended to become incapable voluptuaries. This policy succeeded only too well, and no capable successor sat on the throne of Shah Abbas. Unfortunately for Persia, the respect for the

royal family was so great that no outside chief could overthrow it. The nation thus became effete, its virility being sapped by the effeminacy of its rulers, until it fell shamefully and paid an awful price in blood and dishonour.

Shah Safi, the successor of Shah Abbas, who reigned from 1629 to 1642, was notorious for the merciless manner in which he put to death the princes and even the princesses of the blood, and not content with murdering his own relations, he removed the most famous generals and the most trusted councillors of his grandfather. The Turks, under Murad IV, their last fighting Sultan, took full advantage of the change of rulers. In the first campaign Hamadan was captured in 1630; its inhabitants were massacred and its buildings were destroyed. Baghdad, however, repulsed the besiegers with heavy losses. Five years later Erivan and Tabriz fell to the Turks, who treated the latter city with the same pitiless severity. Finally, in 1638, Baghdad was stormed and its garrison was massacred. Shah Safi, who had made no attempt to meet the Turks, made a peace by the terms of which Turkey retained Baghdad. The lowering of Persian *moral* must have been a more serious blow than the actual loss of Baghdad.

It is of considerable interest to trace the early relations between Russia and Persia. The first recorded embassy of any importance was from Alexis, father of Peter the Great. It consisted of two envoys with 800 followers, many of the latter taking advantage of their privileges to evade the payment of Customs dues. This dishonourable behaviour justly incensed the Shah, who dismissed

the ambassadors without vouchsafing any reply. By way of revenge for this affront, Alexis instigated the Cossacks to raid Mazanderan. They burned Farrahabad, but were finally driven out of an entrenched position in the peninsula of Mian Kala.

At this period many embassies reached Persia from Europe. One of the earliest was dispatched by the Duke of Holstein, who was attracted by the raw silk of Persia, which Holstein required for its manufactories.

The ambassador made disadvantageous arrangements with the Duke of Muscovy for free transit, and upon examining the matter in detail at Isfahan, found that the high cost of freight and customs charges would eat up all profits. Upon his return, he was put to death.

Later, under Sulayman, the last ruler but one of the dynasty, many embassies from Europe reached the court at Isfahan and were received with much pomp and circumstance. Among the most brilliant was that from France, whose representative styled himself 'General and Ambassador from the Great King of Europe'. At this period the English, the Dutch, and the French all maintained commercial representatives at Isfahan, where they were treated with much honour; and, through them and other European travellers, notably Chardin, we possess vivid descriptions of the condition of Persia. It is of considerable interest to note that Charles II of England so admired Persian costume that, for a while, he adopted it as the court dress.

Among the latest embassies to reach Isfahan were two dispatched by Peter the Great, whose representatives again brought merchants in their train. But, at this

period, Persia was obliged to treat the representatives of Russia with all honour. Peter was evidently paving the way for action of an aggressive character and had to be propitiated.

Shah Sultan Husayn, the last monarch of the dynasty, was a mixture of religion, meekness, and uxoriousness. *Mullas* and eunuchs governed Persia, and the whole nation had sunk into ignoble ease, the people having lost their virility as much as their monarchs. Persia, shielded only by her great name, invited attack. One of the frontier provinces of the empire was Kandahar, situated on the borders of the Moghul empire. It had been in the possession of Persia when Shah Abbas sat on the throne and had then fallen into the hands of the Uzbegs. These freebooters had been expelled by Shah Jahan, but a few years later, the province was recovered by Persia. Aurungzeb had besieged Kandahar city, a site of considerable natural strength, but had failed to take it.

The most powerful tribe in the province was that of the Ghilzai, who, as might be supposed, intrigued with the court at Delhi. A Georgian prince, known in Persian history as Gurgin Khan, was appointed to govern the turbulent province, and for some time the tribesmen were overpowered and cowed. But they found a leader in Mir Vais, hereditary Mayor of Kandahar, who had spent useful years as a hostage at Isfahan, followed by the pilgrimage to Mecca, and had realized the growing impotency of Persia. He was a capable intriguer, and alarmed the timid monarch by asserting that the Georgian prince was in league with Peter and was plotting to hand over his country to him. He was thereupon promptly

sent back to Kandahar as a secret check on Gurgin Khan, whom he assassinated; he also massacred his Georgian and Persian troops. He then rallied the tribesmen to the cry of independence, and as the Persian Government took no prompt action, he was given time to establish his power. Finally the Persian Government dispatched a Georgian army to avenge the fallen prince, but the Afghans fought with the courage of despair and annihilated the invaders; a second army suffered a similar defeat, and until his death in 1715, Mir Vais was busily engaged in organizing plans for aggressive action. Almost simultaneously with the Persian disasters in the Kandahar province, a Persian army was routed by the Abdali of Herat, who thereby, like the Ghilzai, won their independence. It is to be noted that the Ghilzai remained enemies of the Abdali and thus weakened the offensive power of the former tribe.

Mir Vais was succeeded by a brother, who was assassinated by Mahmud, the deceased ruler's son, who determined to take advantage of the preparations made by his father. He marched rapidly across the Lut, ravaged Narmashir, and by the aid of the oppressed Zoroastrian community captured Kerman. But Lutf Ali Khan, the Persian General, attacked the invaders with a body of picked troops, routed them and chased them back to Kandahar. Mahmud's first attempt thus ended in disaster. Kerman was fortified and Lutf Ali Khan strengthened his forces, so much so that it seemed improbable that the Afghans would make a second attempt. Nor indeed would they have done so with any prospect of success, but for court intrigues resulting in the downfall of the Vizier and

the dismissal of Fath Ali Khan, who was his brother-in-law. In Persia the army breaks up when its leader is removed.

The year 1721 was of sinister augury. Earthquakes, portents, and risings all played their part, so much so that the craven Shah and his craven people were ready to submit to any bold invader. Mahmud, encouraged by the fall of Lutf Ali Khan, again crossed the Lut. He took Kerman city, but was foiled by the stout resistance of the garrison, and was obliged to leave the fort uncaptured in his rear. At Yezd too he failed, but greatly daring he pressed on to Gulnabad, a village situated on a bare, open plain, eleven miles to the east of Isfahan. The Afghan army was barely 20,000 strong, with only one hundred swivels throwing a two-pound ball for its artillery. The Persian army was 50,000 strong, supported by 24 guns. It was fighting for the existence of its country, close to the capital, and was well supplied.

On the fateful day, the two forces met two miles to the east of Gulnabad, where I have twice examined the site. The Persian cavalry 30,000 strong formed the two wings, and the infantry and artillery were in the centre. The Afghans were drawn up in four divisions, with Mahmud in the centre; the swivels were placed in the rear. The battle opened with a charge by the Persian right wing, which met with some success. The left wing too charged, but the Afghans broke it by a discharge of their 'little wasps', and then fell on the reeling column. The Persians fled, pursued by the Afghans, who found the artillery without an escort, and cut the gunners to pieces. They then turned the guns on to the Persian infantry,

which fled in disorder. No pursuit was attempted, the Afghans busying themselves with plundering the luxurious Persian camp.

The Afghans, after their great victory, remained on the defensive, even allowing the Persians to recover their lost guns. Their spies, however, brought in reports of the panic prevailing at Isfahan, which encouraged them to advance. They took Julfa, which offered a stout resistance, but received no succour from the city. They next attempted to capture one of the bridges across the Zenda Rud, but were repulsed. Mahmud was discouraged, and opened up negotiations which, however, led to nothing. He finally decided to devastate the country, and was fortunate enough to intercept two food convoys. Gradually there was a famine at Isfahan, and as its cowardly defenders would not fight the Shah decided to surrender. He proceeded in person to the Afghan camp, where he was kept waiting by the ungenerous victor. Ushered into his presence, he addressed him: 'Son, since the great Sovereign of the Universe does not will that I should reign any longer, I resign the empire to thee.'

Thus shamefully fell the Safavi dynasty through the cowardice of the ruler and his people. Persians esteemed it more highly than it merited, as it never attempted to restore the ancient boundaries of Persia. Eastwards no attempt was made to conquer Central Asia, and westwards the occupation of Baghdad, Tabriz, and Erivan was all that the Safavi monarchs aimed at. The Turks threatened the very existence of Persia, whereas no Persian army seriously invaded the Turkish empire. It would appear that the prestige of the dynasty gained more by its descent

from Ali and the many embassies from Europe that it welcomed, than from the campaigns of its fighting monarchs.

13

Afghan Domination in Persia

The new order at Isfahan met with no resistance. Mahmud at first ruled justly, allowing the Persian officials to retain their appointments under the supervision of his own representatives. He dispatched a force northwards, which occupied Kum, Kashan, and Kazvin, and, for a while, all seemed to be going well for him. At the same time, the force at his disposal was too small for the task and very few recruits reached him. Rather, his men, who had become rich from plundering, returned home. In mid-winter the Kazvin garrison was attacked and expelled with the loss of 2,000 men, the survivors reaching Isfahan in a state of destitution. Mahmud was bound to hold the capital at all costs, and decided to strengthen his position by instituting a reign of terror and by massacres. He invited the Persian grandees to a banquet, where they were assassinated; he massacred a Persian force that he had raised; and he finally doomed to death every one who had served the deposed monarch. By these atrocious acts Isfahan was depopulated and rendered powerless. He next enlisted a number of Kurds, who being Sunnis, were ready to serve him loyally, and with their aid he reconquered Kashan, which had rebelled after the disaster at Kazvin. He also took Shiraz, but failed before Bandar Abbas and Yezd.

These latter reverses apparently unhinged Mahmud's mind, and he again attempted to strengthen his position by massacring the princes of the blood. The Afghans, realizing the seriousness of their position, put the madman to death and elected his cousin Ashraf to the throne. Thus passed off the stage a man of mediocre capacity, who had nevertheless overthrown a mighty empire, but it resembled a tree with the centre eaten by white ants and fell at the first blow.

While the Safavi dynasty was tottering to its fall, Peter was scheming to annex some of its outlying provinces. In the summer of 1722 he descended the Volga in force and took possession of Derbent. He was marching towards Shamakha and Baku, when a Turkish envoy appeared on the scene and declared that Shamakha had already been captured by them, and that any further advance would be considered a *casus belli*. Peter, whose supply of munitions had been lost in a storm, was unwilling to provoke Turkey at this juncture, and withdrew, leaving a garrison at Derbent. In the following winter Resht was besieged by the Afghans, and its governor implored Russian help. Peter immediately took advantage of this piece of good fortune and occupied Resht and neighbouring centres; during the ensuing summer Baku was bombarded and capitulated.

Tahmasp *Mirza*, son of the Shah, had left Isfahan during the siege, and had tried to collect an army, but without much success. Unable to meet the invaders in the field, he attempted to gain the support of Peter, but without any definite result.

Like Russia, the weakness of Persia tempted Turkey to

take advantage of the favourable opportunity. War was declared on her, and in 1723 Tiflis surrendered. The two Powers then agreed to divide the most valuable provinces of Persia. Russia took the Caspian provinces, already ceded by Tahmasp, while Turkey annexed Tabriz, Hamadan, and Kermanshah, and the districts lying between these centres and the Turkish frontier. A Turkish army was sent to make good these annexations, and both Hamadan and Erivan fell. Tabriz was bravely defended, and its citizens marched out with the honours of war. Had the Isfahanis displayed one tithe of the valour shown by the Tabrizis, the Afghans would never have taken Isfahan.

The accession of Ashraf restored the *moral* of the Afghans. Nevertheless his position was a difficult one, for the Russians were hostile, Tahmasp was gradually collecting a force, and Turkey was bent on the conquest and annexation of Western Persia. Ashraf had dispatched an embassy to Constantinople to remonstrate with the action of a Sunni power, uniting with a Christian power to attack fellow Sunnis who had overthrown the Shia Persians. The feeling at Constantinople was favourable to the Afghans, but the Sublime Porte declared war, and for the first time in history a Turkish army captured Kazvin and marched on Isfahan. Ashraf, who realized the value of propaganda, sent four venerable *mullas* to ask the Turkish leader why he was attacking Moslems who were obeying the divine precepts of the law in overthrowing the heretical Shias. So strong was the feeling in the Turkish camp that there were serious desertions, and when a general engagement was forced,

the Turks, who had no heart for fighting the Afghans, were defeated with heavy loss.

Ashraf showed extreme moderation in victory. He not only refused to allow any pursuit, but released his prisoners with their property intact. As a result, the Sultan recognized Ashraf as Shah, and peace was concluded, Turkey keeping the provinces she had annexed. Shah Tahmasp at this juncture was joined by Nadir Kuli, destined to be the last great Asiatic conqueror. The Kajar Chief had already joined him and a national reaction began. Nadir Kuli induced the young Shah first to secure Meshed and Herat, and when this had been accomplished, the Persian force received hundreds of recruits daily. Ashraf realized that, once again, he must stake everything on a decisive battle, and that delay was to his disadvantage, in view of the rapid growth of the Persian forces. In 1729, the armies met at Mehmandost, near Damghan. The Afghans were no match for the veterans of Nadir, whose heavy musketry and artillery fire inflicted heavy losses. Ashraf attempted the well-worn movement against both flanks, but it failed, and finally Nadir advanced and routed the stubborn Afghans. The defeated army retreated rapidly, and made another stand at Murchakhar to the north of Isfahan, but its numbers were too small and the Afghans were forced to flee to Isfahan. There they collected their families and retired to Shiraz. But although Nadir's movements were deliberate, they were ably executed. The Afghans made a last desperate stand at Zarghan, twenty miles to the north of Shiraz, but again their charge was overwhelmed by musketry fire. The Afghans then broke,

each band under its chief making for Kandahar by a different route. The pursuit was pitiless, the track being easy to identify by the dead animals, and even by corpses of old men and children, who, impeding the flight, had been put to death. Ashraf escaped as far as the Lut, where he was killed by a band of Baluchis. Few of the invaders escaped. One body reached the coast and landed at Bahrein, but was cut to pieces, and a few miserable survivors were seen at Maskat. Thus fell stern and well-merited retribution on the barbarous Ghilzais. Their organization was good enough for war against a cowardly people, but fell to pieces when it was necessary to consolidate and administer their conquests.

14

The Napoleon of Asia

Nadir Shah, the Napoleon of Asia, was of very humble origin. His father was a member of the Kirklu tribe, which, owing to its weakness, united with the powerful Afshars. He lived at Kupkan, a village close to Darragaz, which I have visited, and earned a poor living by making *pustin* or skin-coats and by grazing a few sheep and goats ; in the winter he left the ice-bound uplands, and crossing the Allah ho Akbar range, descended on to the warmer plains to the north. Nadir was bred in the school of adversity. When about eighteen years of age, both he and his mother were carried off by a party of raiding Uzbegs. His mother died in captivity, but he managed to escape, and entered the service of the governor of

Abivard, the capital of what is now known as the Darragaz district. Nadir married his master's daughter, and upon his death succeeded to the governorship. He distinguished himself in his attacks on the Uzbegs, while serving Malik Mahmud, the ruler of Khorasan, and gained invaluable experience in the use of musketry and artillery. Presuming on his success, he claimed the deputy-governorship of Khorasan, only to be beaten and dismissed. He promptly retorted by becoming a robber, gaining possession of impregnable Kalat-i-Nadiri. This success increased the number of his men, and he proceeded to seize Nishapur by luring the main body of the garrison into an ambush. Shortly afterwards he joined Shah Tahmasp and rendered the signal services already detailed. His reward was the rule of Khorasan, Sistan, Kerman, and Mazanderan, together with the title of Sultan. Nadir did not assume the title, but struck money with his own name and paid his troops with it; in the East this amounts to sovereignty. After expelling the Afghans, Nadir concentrated all his energies on driving the Turks out of Persia. His first campaign was most successful. He defeated a Turkish army near Hamadan, and as a result the provinces of Irak and Azerbaijan fell to him. He was besieging Erivan when news of a rebellion in Khorasan compelled him to raise the siege and march eastwards to invest Herat, distant perhaps 1,400 miles. During his absence, Tahmasp, jealous of Nadir's fame, took the field, but only to suffer defeat. So much so was this the case that he lost everything Nadir had won back and made a disastrous peace. This fatuous conduct gave Nadir the pretext he had hitherto lacked. Tahmasp

was arrested and imprisoned in Khorasan, and thenceforward Nadir was the virtual ruler of Persia.

His second campaign against the Turks opened with the siege of Baghdad, which was bravely defended. The advance of a powerful Turkish army induced Nadir to divide up his force, and leaving 12,000 men to continue the siege he marched north and met the Turks at Kirkuk, now a well-known centre in the Jabal Hamrin. The battle was desperately contested, but at length, after eight hours' fighting, the Persians fled. As a result the Baghdad division was annihilated. Nadir showed a fine spirit at this critical juncture. Instead of reproaching his officers and men, he made good their losses and encouraged them with such success that recruits by thousands flocked to his standard, and within three months of his defeat he was ready to take the field again. His army, thirsting for revenge, found the Turks in the same neighbourhood. They had received no reinforcements, and were unable to withstand the Persian onset, which drove the Ottoman army off the field in headlong flight. Nadir advanced on Baghdad, but made terms with its brave defenders. The Turks were unwilling to accept defeat, and a fresh army was soon organized, based on Kars. Nadir besieged Tiflis, Erivan, and Ganja to force the enemy to fight a decisive battle. This took place on the plain of Baghavand, and resulted in a crushing defeat for the Turks. The spoils of victory were Tiflis, Ganja, and Erivan. Peace was made a few months later, and it was realized that Persia had produced a great general and was well able to protect herself. Upon the death of Peter the Great his forward policy was abandoned, and

in 1732, by the treaty of Resht, the Caspian provinces were restored to Persia. Three years later Baku and Derbent were also evacuated, and by this act the conquests of Peter were all relinquished. Yet his policy of denying the Caspian Sea littoral to Turkey had succeeded. A strong Persia was the best possible safeguard against Turkish aggrandizement in this direction.

The Afshar shepherd had now risen almost to the zenith of his fame. He had expelled the Afghans and the Turks, who had virtually dismembered Persia. He had also regained the Caspian provinces of Northern Persia, and had reasserted her sovereignty to her ancient northern frontier of Derbent. His reward was to be invited to ascend the vacant throne, and on an auspicious day, before a great gathering of dignitaries and envoys, the shepherd assumed the crown and sat on the throne of Noshirwan and Shah Abbas.

The year after his coronation, Nadir started on his amazing career of conquest. The first enemy to be attacked was obviously the Ghilzai tribe, which had inflicted such terrible wounds on Persia. The ruler of the Kandahar province was Husayn, brother of Mahmud, who, unable to meet Nadir's powerful army in the field, shut himself up in the strong fortress which had baffled Aurungzebe. Nadir Shah showed to little advantage in this campaign. Instead of attacking Kandahar by trenches and assaults, he decided to capture the city by blockade. But it was well provisioned, and after a year was still untaken. He now took active measures, various towers occupying commanding positions were stormed, and Kandahar surrendered. Nadir did not permit a massacre

and treated the Afghans with statesmanlike moderation. He enrolled a body of their warriors, and they served him loyally.

The Moghul Emperor of India was Mohamed Shah, an indolent and voluptuous ruler, whose weakness had alienated his nobles, some of whom were in correspondence with Nadir. So far as the military situation was concerned, it was unlikely that the Indian troops would face the veterans of Nadir, who had marched from victory to victory against such fine natural fighters as the Turks. Nadir had informed the Court at Delhi of his Afghan campaign and had requested that no refugees should be granted asylum across the frontier. The councillors of the Emperor did not take any effectual steps to meet his wishes, relying on the supposed impregnability of Kandahar. Moreover, they could not forget that Nadir Shah was an upstart. It is probable that the Great Afshar would have created a pretext for invading India had one been lacking, but the discourtesy shown to his envoys, and the unsatisfactory replies of the Emperor, must have caused him considerable gratification.

From Kandahar Nadir marched on Kabul, which he captured with some difficulty. He found a rich booty, including money for the payment of his troops. He then marched down the historic route followed by invaders of India, and although delayed by the tribes of the Khyber Pass, he had crossed the Indus at Attock before the voluptuaries of Delhi realized that he was threatening India. Mohamed Shah collected a powerful army and marched up the Jumna to Karnal, some sixty miles from the capital. He there prepared an entrenched

camp and awaited the invader, who marched rapidly across the Panjab. Nadir, who realized that his troops were not trained to storm fortified positions, was unwilling to attack, and was considering the best line to take when Saadat Khan, one of the leading Indian princes, arrived with a force of 30,000 troops. He insisted on giving battle immediately, and hearing that a detached force of six thousand Kurds was ravaging the country, he led his troops against them. On both sides reinforcements were brought up and the engagement became general. Nadir employed his usual tactics of an ambush and defeated and captured Saadat Khan. The Indian troops were discouraged, and although merely a portion of them had actually taken part in the battle, they all fled. The spoils of Delhi were incredibly rich and were reckoned at about ninety millions sterling. Among the trophies was the celebrated Peacock Throne, which is described in detail by Tavernier, the French jeweller. Nadir wisely decided to leave the harmless Mohamed Shah on the throne and merely to annex a few provinces bordering on the Kandahar province. He realized clearly that he could not administer so vast an empire from distant Isfahan. He made an alliance with the defeated monarch, and his second son, Nasrulla, married his daughter. The story runs that when the pedigree of the bridegroom was demanded for seven generations, the grim reply was given that he was son of Nadir, the son of the sword, the grandson of the sword, and so on for seventy generations.

The conqueror slowly retraced his steps to the Iranian plateau, readily paying blackmail to the Khyber tribesmen rather than risk his treasure.

The conquest of Bokhara and Khiva was a mere corollary to the campaigns of the Great Afshar. These two petty states were ruled by separate Uzbeg dynasties. From Khiva especially raiding bands annually ravaged Khorasan, one of which, as already mentioned, had carried off Nadir, who must have felt special pleasure in punishing these man-stealers. The campaign was organized from Balkh, and the rations consisted mainly of large quantities of grain transported in boats. Abul Fayz Khan of Bokhara submitted. The terms included the recognition of the Oxus as the boundary of Persia and the provision of an Uzbeg contingent eight thousand strong. The treaty was sealed by a double marriage.

The campaign against Khiva was not so easy. The Turkoman nearly succeeded in destroying the grain convoy, on which the army entirely depended, but were just beaten off. Nadir then marched down the Oxus. The *Khan* had put to death or mutilated his ambassadors and should therefore have fought to the death. On the contrary, he tamely surrendered and was executed, with twenty of his advisers. There was no massacre of the Khivans. A number of Persians were freed from slavery, as one result of this campaign, and were given land in the village which was founded by Nadir to commemorate his birthplace.

Nadir's first unsuccessful campaign was fought against the Lesghians, who occupied a densely wooded and mountainous country in Daghestan, and who later, for many years, defied the might of Russia. The savage highlanders had raided the fertile valleys and killed Ibrahim Khan, the only brother of the Shah. He was

bound to seek revenge, and penetrating into the recesses of the range, fought desperately against the brave tribesmen, who had all the advantage as to terrain. Lack of supplies finally drove him to retreat with heavy losses to the coast, where his army was saved by the opportune arrival of shiploads of grain purchased at Astrakhan. Nadir was baffled. He realized that the Lesghians had been supported by Russia, and that it was unlikely that he could ever succeed against them owing to this outside support, the difficulties of the terrain, and the fact that they could and would retreat farther and farther into the ranges. Nadir's character thenceforward rapidly deteriorated, and he gave way to fits of wild fury and to acts of impolitic cruelty, the blinding of Riza Kuli, his eldest son, being a signal instance of his readiness to condemn on suspicion.

One result of the Daghestan disaster was the outbreak of rebellions in the Shirwan, Fars, and Astrabad provinces, all of which were crushed without much difficulty. The Astrabad rebellion is of special interest to us, as the British merchant Jonas Hanway was taken prisoner, and only escaped being enslaved by good chance. He wrote a graphic account of the rising and of the merciless severity with which it was crushed.

The Lesghian disaster had encouraged Turkey to avenge her former defeats. War was declared, and for a while defensive tactics were pursued by the Sunni power, until the largest army Turkey had yet put into the field advanced from Kars, ready to fight a decisive battle. The Turkish army was composed of 100,000 cavalry and 40,000 infantry, and the battle was fought

on the same ground as the last. For some days there were combats, which finally culminated in the utter rout of the Turks, who lost thousands of men, their artillery, and their baggage. Peace was then made on the terms fixed in the treaty which had been broken.

The last years of Nadir Shah were years of misery for his unhappy empire. Wherever he passed, he killed hundreds of his subjects, driving the miserable remnant to the hills. At length when he was besieging Kuchan, a fellow tribesman who commanded his guard killed him in his tent, set on a mound, which was pointed out to me. Thus fell Nadir, a born leader of men, endowed with superb physique, dauntless courage, and a voice of thunder. Generous at first, the spoils of Delhi transformed him into a bloodthirsty miser. Had he died after his conquests in India and Central Asia, he would have remained a national hero for all time, but the last years of his reign made his name execrated by the people whom he had delivered from the Afghans.

15

The Zand Dynasty

The assassination of Nadir Shah broke up his composite army which obeyed him alone. Ahmad Khan, Durrani,[1] the commander of the Afghan and Uzbeg contingents, alone sought to avenge his fallen leader, but he was defeated and retreated to Kandahar, where, aided by the

[1] The Abdali changed their name to Durrani, in consequence of a dream of Ahmad Khan.

capture of a rich treasure convoy from Delhi, he founded the kingdom of Afghanistan.

Nadir was succeeded by one of his nephews, who was blinded by his brother; but before long, both these rulers were put to death by their own troops, who regarded them as usurpers. The undoubted heir of Nadir was Shah Rukh, son of the unfortunate Riza Kuli by Fatima, daughter of Shah Husayn. He was placed on the throne, but only to be blinded by a Meshed *Sayyid*, who had married a sister of the last Safavi monarch. This pretender was quickly overthrown, blinded and put to death, and the ill-starred Shah Rukh ruled in Khorasan, which was constituted a separate state under the protection of Ahmad Shah, to give the Afghan his new title.

The rest of Persia became a cockpit for pretenders to the throne. The best known of these was Mohamed Husayn Khan, Kajar chief, who, upon the assassination of Nadir Shah, had seized the Caspian provinces and had successfully opposed Ahmad Shah. There was also Azad the Afghan, who was governor of Azerbaijan at Nadir's death. A third claimant was Ali Mardan, a Bakhtiari chief, who seized Isfahan in the name of a puppet Safavi prince. A fourth pretender was Karim Khan of the Zand, an old Persian tribe. He had served with no special distinction under Nadir, but after his assassination became the leader of a large band and joined Ali Mardan. The latter, becoming jealous of his influence, intended to assassinate Karim, but the Zand rode off with his followers, and the Bakhtiari chief was himself assassinated shortly afterwards.

The three pretenders fought a curious triangular duel with dramatic changes of fortune. Karim Khan, who was apparently the weakest of the three, first entrapped and then defeated Azad, who escaped, but afterwards surrendered to him. He then, after some vicissitudes, finally defeated the Kajar chief,who was killed by a member of his own tribe. He thereby became ruler of all Persia, except Khorasan.

The Zand chief never aspired to the title of Shah, but assumed that of *Vakil* or Regent. He made Shiraz the capital, and adorned it with fine buildings, which are still in good condition.

The Shirazis all bear the fondest recollection of the homely old man, and many are the stories I have heard of his kindliness, humour, and fairness. Under him, Persia had a sorely needed rest, and began to recover something of her prosperity and well-being.

Owing to the Afghan invasion and the subsequent period of disorder, the European factories were almost all closed in Persia. One of the last to remain, the English establishment at Bandar Abbas, was shut up in 1761, through the intolerable exactions of the Governor of Law. Karim Khan was most anxious to develop the foreign trade of Persia, and invited the English to found a factory at Bushire, giving them a *farman* embodying remarkably favourable terms. At first the trade was miserably small, but it gradually improved, and Bushire is still the chief British centre in the Persian Gulf.

Upon the death of the aged Karim Khan, there was the usual fight for power among the members of his

family, which continued for a decade. Meanwhile Aga Mohamed Khan, a eunuch chief of the Kajar tribe, was gradually collecting a powerful force, and it was realized that the fight for supremacy between the two families would have to be fought out again. Lutf Ali Khan, a brave but tactless Prince, represented the Zand dynasty, and was at first supported by *Haji* Ibrahim, a remarkable man, who rose from the post of mayor of Shiraz to that of Vizierof Persia. The *Haji* informed Sir John Malcolm that the cruelty and injustice of Lutf Ali drove him to join the Kajar chief. It is more probable that he weighed up the factors of the situation carefully, and decided that the Kajars were the stronger side and would win.

His influence was decisive. In 1791 Lutf Ali Khan marched out from Shiraz to meet the army of Aga Mohamed, and *Haji* Ibrahim, taking advantage of his absence, seized the citadel and the various commanding officers. Moreover his emissaries excited a mutiny in the army with such success that Lutf Ali was forced to flee to the coast. There he collected a small force of Arabs and very soon reappeared before Shiraz. He then met a powerful force under Aga Mohamed Shah which defeated him. However, he rallied his men and charged the enemy who had dispersed in search of loot. After winning a complete victory he pressed on to the Kajar camp. It was night, and as he was assured that the Shah had fled, he decided to await the dawn before taking possession of the spoils, for he knew that once the Arabs seized it, he would recover nothing from them. This delay cost him the throne. Before dawn the *muezzin* called to prayers, therefore proving that the Shah

was still there, and as Lutf Ali's men had dispersed, he was glad to escape.

The final act of the drama saw Lutf Ali besieged in the city of Kerman. He held the Kajar at bay until half the population had died from famine. When the city was stormed he fled to Bam, where his host delivered him up to the mercies of his vindictive enemy, who blinded him with his own hands and subsequently strangled him.

Thus fell the Zand dynasty. Lutf Ali Khan had fought heroically, but his fiery, overbearing nature made him no match for the keen, calculating Kajar.

16

The Kajar Dynasty and Intercourse with Europe

After the overthrow of the Zand dynasty, Aga Mohamed realized that the best way to gain control of the various provinces of Persia was to fight a successful campaign with Georgia, which was not only weak but would yield incomparable spoils in the shape of beautiful women and children. Upon the death of Nadir, Heraclius, its king, who had served him faithfully, had declared his independence and had annexed provinces up to the River Aras, the present boundary of Persia. Realizing that as soon as Persia was reunited, he would be attacked, he made a treaty with Russia, by the terms of which he renounced all connexion with Persia. In return he was promised Russian protection.

In 1795, the year after the capture of Kerman, Aga

Mohamed crossed the Aras with a force of sixty thousand men. Heraclius, instead of retiring to his fortresses and awaiting aid from Russia, rashly faced the invaders, who outnumbered him in the proportion of four to one, and overpowered the heroic Georgians. Tiflis was taken and sacked, and the victorious army marched off with twenty thousand of the youth of both sexes. After Georgia, the Shah turned his attention to Khorasan. This state was still ruled by Shah Rukh. He was unable to resist, and the Afghans were too weak to fight the veterans of Aga Mohamed. He consequently yielded. But Aga Mohamed wanted more than the possession of Khorasan. He coveted with an intense passion the jewels which he knew Shah Rukh had concealed from every one, including his own sons. The wretched man denied the existence of any hidden treasure, but in vain. He was handed over to the torturers, and day by day some valuable jewel was produced from its hiding-place. Last of all the famous ruby of Aurungzeb was extracted by pouring molten lead on to a circle of paste which had been put on his head. The tale of the jewels was complete—and Shah Rukh, worn out by the tortures, died.

Catherine of Russia was undoubtedly chagrined by her failure to protect Heraclius of Georgia, and in due cours e of time a powerful Russian army appeared on the scene, Derbent and Baku fell, and before winter set in, the provinces north of the Aras were in Russian hands.

Aga Mohamed prepared to take the field in the spring of 1797, when news of the death of the Empress reached the combatants. Her successor, Paul, reversed his mother's policy, and withdrew his troops, leaving Aga Mohamed

master of the situation. He was preparing to invade Georgia a second time, when he was assassinated by two of his body servants, whom he had condemned to die on the following day.

Thus died the eunuch Shah, whose ruling passions were power, avarice, and revenge. Yet such self-control had he, that he was able to subordinate everything to his passion for power. He was most fortunate in his foreign campaigns, for during his reign Turkey remained inert, while Russia, whom he could not have faced with success, withdrew from Georgia owing to the death of Catherine. No monarch is more detested by Persians, who even now rarely mention him without expressions of hatred and contempt.

The body of Aga Mohamed was left unburied in the turmoil caused by his death. His heir, Fath Ali, was Governor-General of Fars, and *Haji* Ibrahim exerted his remarkable powers to keep together a force sufficiently strong to march on Teheran and occupy it before any pretender could do so. Thanks to these measures, Fath Ali was crowned at Teheran, and although many pretenders arose, they were all successfully dealt with and the authority of the new Shah was acknowledged all over Persia.

It was during the long reign of this monarch that Persia came within the orbit of European politics. The first step in the direction of opening up political relations with her came from the British rulers in India. In 1798, Lord Wellesley, the Governor-General of Bengal, received a letter from Zaman Shah, Amir of Kabul, in which he stated his intention of making an expedition into India and requested the British to co-operate with

him in driving back the Marathas from the north into the Deccan. Wellesley was at war with Tippu Sultan at this period, but that powerful chief was fortunately killed in 1798, and relieved the British from much anxiety. However, an Afghan invasion would have caused equal concern, and it was decided to attempt to utilize Persia as a check on Zaman Shah. The agent first selected was Mehdi Ali Khan, who was acting as the Resident of the Company at Bushire. He was sent to Teheran with instructions 'to take measures for inducing the Court of Persia to keep Shah Zaman in perpetual check (so as to preclude him from returning to India), but without any decided act of hostility'. The difficult task of the British Agent was made easy by the action of Zaman Shah, who about this period sent an envoy with a demand that Persia should restore Khorasan to Afghanistan. This demand offended the young Shah, who replied that it was his intention to restore the eastern boundaries of Persia as they were in Safavi days. In other words, Afghanistan would again be made subject to Persia. This reply, together with an expedition under the two brothers of Zaman Shah, who were supported by Persian troops, helped the British materially, Zaman Shah retiring from Lahore to Peshawar to meet the threat to his western provinces. Mehdi Khan's mission was a complete success. Spending large sums in presents, he persuaded the Shah to continue his operations against Afghanistan. He also undoubtedly prepared the way for an accredited British envoy, who was about to land in Persia.

The genius of Napoleon appears to have dominated his adversaries to such an extent that even his fantastic

schemes caused them serious alarm. Among these must be reckoned his plan of using the Shah as an instrument for the invasion of India in co-operation with French and Russian troops. To us who have studied large scale maps, and are familiar with the barrenness of Persia and Afghanistan, the scheme was impracticable. But, in 1800, it was seriously contemplated by Napoleon and Paul of Russia. Indeed the former, in 1801, ordered the Don Cossacks to march on India. The movement was actually begun, without supply columns or even maps, but it was stopped at the Volga upon the death of the Tsar. This was fortunate, for the expedition was foredoomed to disaster. The British, who realized that Napoleon's agents would be busy in Persia, decided to dispatch Captain John Malcolm to Persia as the envoy of the Governor-General. His instructions were to induce the Shah to bring pressure to bear on Zaman Shah, to counteract any possible designs of the French, and to help to establish commercial relations between Great Britain and India on the one side and Persia on the other. Malcolm's success was complete. His attractive personality won over the Persians from the Shah downwards, and his lavish distribution of gifts appealed to the greedy courtiers. Under these favourable conditions a political and commercial treaty was speedily negotiated. The Shah agreed to make no peace with Afghanistan until the Amir renounced his designs on the British possessions in India. He also agreed to consider the French as his enemies. The British envoy, in return, promised to furnish munitions in case Persia was invaded by the Afghans or the French.

On the commercial side the English and Indian

merchants were invited to settle in Persia free of taxes, and the chief British imports, broadcloth, iron, steel, and lead, were admitted free of duty. Malcolm's first mission was thus a complete success, for not only did he gain the immediate objects he had in view, but he made the name and honour of the British respected in Persia, so much so that to-day the promise of an Englishman is considered absolutely dependable.

We must now turn for a while to Persian domestic politics. Fath Ali Shah owed his throne to *Haji* Ibrahim, but such services are frequently dangerous for subjects to render. The Vizier was undoubtedly the King-maker of Persia, and as his sons ruled many of the provinces his power was a danger to the throne. Fath Ali Shah took action. On a certain day, *Haji* Ibrahim and his sons were seized and put to death, the Vizier's fate being to be thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil. He may have been arrogant and unscrupulous, but to inflict such a fate on him was a disgrace to Fath Ali Shah.

After the death of *Haji* Ibrahim, the Shah was able to assert his authority against his brother, who made a bid for the throne. He also secured his hold on Khorasan by putting to death Nadir *Mirza*, the son of Shah Rukh, whose tyranny brought about his downfall. The authority of the Shah was also strengthened in South-east Persia by the expulsion of semi-independent Afghan chiefs from Bam, Narmashir, and Khabis.

The British left no permanent representative at the court of Persia, and this unwise omission brought them much trouble. Napoleon was not the man to allow his schemes to fall through. In 1802 his agents made over-

tures to Persia, but these were coldly received. Two years later, the French Government made definite proposals for an alliance against Russia. Fath Ali Shah had already applied for help to England through the British Resident at Baghdad, and was also dispatching a mission to India ; consequently no definite reply was made to the French.

In 1805 hostilities broke out between France and Russia, and in the following year M. Jaubert appeared at Teheran. On behalf of the Emperor, he offered to restore Georgia and to subsidize the Persian army, in return for which Persia was to join France in an invasion of India. Fath Ali Shah was most unwilling to become the ally of a nation which had put its monarch to death. On the other hand, there was no British representative at hand to advise him, and his appeals for help had remained unanswered. Finally, he entirely reversed his policy, and agreed both to attack Russia and also to join in an invasion of India. Fortune, however, favoured the inert British. By the time the French had agreed to the Persian terms, Napoleon had made peace with Tsar Alexander ; and there is every reason to believe that, at their historical meeting, the partition of the East was discussed. In any case Persia was thrown over, the question of Georgia not being even referred to in the Convention of Tilsit. Outwardly, however, French influence was all-powerful, and a French Mission was drilling and organizing Persian troops.

At this junction Malcolm again appeared on the scene, and escorted by a powerful squadron landed at Bushire in the summer of 1808. He was not invited to Teheran,

but instructed to deal with the Governor-General of Fars. This affront was intentional, and it was decided to occupy the island of Kharak, but just as the expedition was about to sail, it became clear that France could not possibly spare an army for Persia. The Afghan menace, too, had passed, the country being involved in a fight for power between members of the ruling family.

Meanwhile Fath Ali Shah was coming to the conclusion that General Gardanne was unable to secure the restoration of Georgia through French good offices; he consequently regretted his breach with the British in India. Fortune favoured him, for in the autumn of 1808, Sir Harford Jones, who had been Resident at Basra, appeared on the scene as the representative of the British Government (as opposed to the Governor-General of Bengal), and in patronizing language proceeded 'to throw the aegis of the British Crown over the imperilled destinies of India'.

Knowing Fath Ali Shah's avarice, he brought proposals for an annual subsidy of £120,000 so long as Great Britain continued to be at war with Russia. He also brought (and allowed the fact to be known) a diamond as a gift to the Shah from George III. Fath Ali could not resist these tempting offers. General Gardanne was dismissed, the British envoy was accorded a magnificent reception, and a preliminary treaty was negotiated, which was approved of both in India and in England.

The only unfortunate incident was the bitter feeling engendered in India. Jones was attacked for having, as it was alleged, spoken slightingly of the position of the Governor-General, and Lord Minto went so far as to refuse to honour his bills. Finally it was arranged that

Malcolm should be sent to execute the new treaty, although Jones remained in charge of diplomatic relations with Persia.

In 1810 Malcolm landed on his third mission. He was magnificently equipped, and his staff included Lindsay, an artillery officer who stood 6 feet 8 inches. The Persians, who compared him to Rustam, subsequently made him Commander-in-Chief, a post that he filled with much credit. Other officers were Pottinger, Christie, and Monteith, all of whom greatly distinguished themselves as explorers. Malcolm was received with extraordinary marks of esteem and friendship, the Shah treating him as an honoured and intimate friend, and his influence and advice were of great benefit to Persia.

In 1814 a definite Treaty was signed with Persia, by the terms of which all treaties or military co-operation with nations hostile to Great Britain were barred, Persia engaging not only to prevent hostile armies from crossing Persia, but to use her influence to induce the rulers of Khiva, Tataristan, Bokhara, and Samarcand to do likewise. In return for these articles, the British engaged to pay a subsidy of £150,000 per annum. This very large sum was perhaps the best proof of the seriousness of the French peril in the eyes of British statesmen, and it was dealt with effectually. On the other hand, it was not realized in England that, since Russia had annexed Georgia and Karabagh, an entirely new situation had been created in which that power would be the protagonist, and that the grant of a subsidy to Persia, which was only to be stopped if Persia engaged in an aggressive war, was bound to lead to complications.

At the beginning of this chapter the relations of Persia and Russia have been referred to. It is now time to deal with the question as it developed. Georgia naturally feared and hated Persia. Her monarch also realized that she was not able to stand alone, and in 1800, on his death-bed, he offered the crown to Tsar Paul, who readily accepted it. It was clear that Persia would fight Russia for Georgia. The campaigns that ensued fell into two distinct periods. The first ended with Persia's defeat in 1812, peace being made in 1813 by the treaty of Gulistan. Thirteen years later Persia again attempted to win back Georgia, and her ultimate defeat in 1827 was recorded in the following year in the treaty of Turkomanchai.

The Persian army was commanded by the heir-apparent, Abbas *Mirza*, who had encouraged European officers in their efforts to train his levies into an army modelled on those in Europe. These instructors did their work well, but their efforts were mainly rendered nugatory by the well meaning Persian prince, who invariably lost his head at the critical moment. Fath Ali Shah too was to blame. Although Persia was at war with Russia, this old miser refused to unlock the doors of his treasury, but insisted on the cost being borne almost entirely by the province of Azerbaijan. It remains to add that the strength of Persia really lay in her tribesmen, and that they were her best arm, as her regular artillery and infantry were not kept paid or clothed, nor was the question of munitions ever properly considered.

In 1804 hostilities broke out, as General Sisianoff, apparently without a formal declaration of war, marched

on Erivan, which he had reason to believe would be surrendered to him. Two engagements were fought without any decisive result, but the Persian cavalry by cutting off convoys and destroying supplies, forced the Russians to raise the siege and retire. For eight years the war was prosecuted in a desultory fashion, the Russians failing in a descent on Resht and equally failing in a second attempt on Erivan. In 1812 a decisive action was fought at Aslanduz. The European situation had materially changed, as Russia had concluded peace with Great Britain, and the British instructors were consequently withdrawn, with the exception of Lindsay and Christie. The Persian army was in camp on the Aras, and was surprised in broad daylight by a small Russian column of only 2,300 men with six guns. Christie drew up the infantry, and was holding his own when Abbas *Mirza* in a panic ordered a retreat, seizing the colours of a regiment, and giving wildly contradictory orders to the men. Gallant Christie was wounded, and refusing to surrender, was killed. Lindsay dashed back into camp and brought off some rounds of ammunition. The Russians, realizing their chance, followed up the Persians, and attacking the demoralized force at night, annihilated it.

The Persians had entirely lost their *moral*, and after this disaster the Shah begged for peace. The terms were disastrous, for Persia ceded Derbent, Shirwan, and Karabagh. She also abandoned all pretensions to Georgia and neighbouring petty states. Russia, at this very time, was at the crisis of her fate owing to the invasion of Napoleon. Consequently she was very fortunate to secure peace on such advantageous terms. The behaviour of Abbas *Mirza*

was contemptible throughout. Having caused the disaster through his own lack of calmness, he yielded to all the demands of Russia, merely stipulating that his own claims to the throne should receive Russian support.

As was only natural, the defeat of Persia reacted unfavourably, both internally and externally. The chiefs of Khorasan, who always hated the Kajars, revolted and invited the Khan of Khiva to their aid. The Turkoman also revolted. Both these risings were finally crushed.

In her dealings with Afghanistan, Persia showed an aggressive spirit, probably hoping to make good her losses in the west by recovering her former Afghan provinces. In pursuance of this policy, in 1817, a Persian army marched on Herat, but was bought off by a payment of money and an agreement to strike coinage in the name of Fath Ali Shah. As, however, the Prince of Herat was seized and imprisoned at Kabul, this recognition of Persian suzerainty went no farther, Afghanistan being convulsed with internal troubles.

Hostilities with Turkey broke out in 1821. They were not serious in character, and Persia had distinctly the best of the fighting. The Russian Agent at Teheran induced Abbas *Mirza* to invade the districts adjacent to Azerbaijan, which he did without meeting with much resistance. Farther south the Pasha of Baghdad invaded Persian soil, but was routed and pursued to the gates of the city. The campaign ended in a Persian success, and peace was concluded by the Treaty of Erzerum in 1823.

When the Persians recovered from their panic, they felt that the treaty of Gulistan was a national disgrace and were anxious to wipe it out. Abbas *Mirza*, who was

particularly vainglorious, burned to retrieve his lost reputation. The treaty had been so vaguely worded that three districts lying between Erivan and the Gokcha Lake remained in dispute. Negotiations were being carried on, but before an agreement was reached Gokcha was occupied by a Russian force. Persian public feeling was deeply stirred, recruits began to assemble, and peace-loving Fath Ali Shah was forced into breaking the treaty with the formidable Northern Power. The Russians were unprepared, and at first the Persians carried all before them. So successful were they that Shirwan, Shaki, Talish, and Ganja were occupied in less than a month. But the Persians could not face Russian troops. An action was fought near Ganja, and although the Persians were numerically superior, their cavalry fled, demoralized by the Russian artillery fire. The Russian infantry then advanced and routed the Persian army, which left its artillery behind in its disordered retreat. Again, in 1826, a second battle was fought in the same neighbourhood. Abbas *Mirza* unfortunately commanded the Persians, and although his artillery, commanded by a British officer, caused a Russian division to retreat, no advance was ordered. Abbas *Mirza* again lost his head and gave orders for retreat, with the result that there was a panic, the Vizier riding for over 100 miles before he halted.

Paskievich in 1827 besieged Erivan, but at first with no success. Abbas *Mirza* indeed gained a victory in the neighbourhood of Echmiadzin, and had Fath Ali Shah granted the money, this success might have saved the situation. But the old miser refused to pay the army, with the result that Erivan at length fell to Paskievich,

who was granted the well-earned title of Count of Erivan.

The end was now near, for realizing the loss of Persian *moral* and the defenceless condition of Tabriz, the Russian commandant of Nakhchivan, a fortress captured earlier in the year, marched on the capital of Azerbaijan with a force of five thousand men. The Persian troops had been dismissed to their homes through lack of money, and there was no adequate garrison to defend the arsenal or the artillery park.

Thus ignominiously hostilities came to an end. The victors, embarrassed by war with Turkey, made no exorbitant demands. The chief articles included the cession of Erivan and Nakhchivan and an indemnity of approximately £3,000,000. The Aras became the frontier as far east as the 48th parallel of longitude. It then trended southwards, giving Lankoran to Russia, and thence eastwards to the Caspian Sea at Astara. Embodied in the treaty, called after the village of Turkomanchai, was a separate commercial agreement, by the terms of which 5 per cent. was agreed to for the customs' charges on exports and imports. Finally, the Russians maintained extra-territorial rights over their own subjects.

This treaty marked the end of the old order and inaugurated a new era. It also became the basis on which all European powers subsequently conducted their intercourse with Persia. Of still greater importance, it proved that the importance of Persia, the independent country, courted by Great Britain and France, had given place to a weak power that was much dependent on Russia.

Great Britain speedily recognized the changed position.

She held justly that Persia had waged an aggressive war on Russia, and that the articles of the treaty absolved her from paying any further sums. Abbas *Mirza* was in dire straits from lack of money to pay General Paskievich, who was entitled to advance on Teheran in case of default. The British Minister negotiated an agreement with Abbas *Mirza*, by the terms of which a single payment of £150,000 was to cancel Articles 3 and 4 of the Definitive Treaty.

17

Persia and Afghanistan

The defeat by Russia detailed in the last chapter was final, and Persia realized that she was not able to fight the Northern Power. Consequently, as a salve to her wounded pride, she made strenuous efforts to recover Herat and other provinces that once formed part of the Persian Empire to balance her heavy losses in the North-west. This trend of policy was viewed with apprehension by the British rulers in India, for they realized that Persia was under Russian influence, and that if she re-conquered Herat, Kabul, and Kandahar, Muscovite agents would be established close to the Panjab, to our great detriment. Actually Persia's objective throughout this period was Herat, and so the British made strenuous, and, finally, successful efforts to keep Afghanistan outside the spheres of influence of both Persia and Russia. Her efforts included costly missions, war with Afghanistan, and even a campaign against her friend Persia.

Abbas *Mirza* was entrusted with the task of directing

Persian aggression eastwards. First of all, he had to restore order in the Yezd and Kerman provinces, a task that was easily effected.

Meanwhile, Khusru *Mirza* had taken Turshiz in Khorasan. Kuchan too submitted. The most important fortress to hold out was Sarakhs, as the Khan of Khiva had advanced to its neighbourhood and had to be reckoned with. But the surrender of Kuchan frightened him, and he retired to the desert, leaving the Salor Turkoman to bear the brunt of Abbas *Mirza's* attack. Sarakhs, situated at a ford on the Tejen, half-way between the cities of Merv and Nishapur, was an important frontier fortress of Persia and it was necessary to recover it, as from it the Turkoman sallied out and carried off men, women, and children to sell in the slave-markets of Khiva. Abbas *Mirza*, after negotiations for surrender which came to nothing, assaulted and captured Sarakhs, massacred its Turkoman garrison, and released some 3,000 Persian prisoners. This blow resounded over Central Asia, and for a while Khorasan was free from raiders. It also constituted a distinct military success for the Persian heir-apparent. Shortly afterwards he died.

A year later, at the age of sixty-eight, after a reign of thirty-seven years, Fath Ali Shah died. He was no soldier, and his love of jewels and money brought disaster upon Persia. His subjects remember him chiefly for his enormous family and his long beard. There were also many stories current as to his vanity and his love of pomp. He probably failed to realize that a new era had dawned, and that he had ceased to be an independent sovereign.

Mohamed Shah, son of Abbas *Mirza*, ascended the throne. One of his uncles prepared to contest his rights, but thanks to Lindsay (now Sir Henry Lindsay Bethune), the pretender was defeated near Kumishah.

At this period a second British Military Mission reached Persia, among the officers being Rawlinson, Stoddart, Sheil, and D'Arcy Todd, all of whom distinguished themselves. The Persians showed hostility to the mission, although it brought large quantities of arms, ammunition, and accoutrements as a gift. The British officers had no control over the pay or promotion of the Persians, and the young Shah showed no intention of supporting them. Indeed his policy in Afghanistan was bound to bring him into conflict with Great Britain, more especially as it was realized that he was entirely under Russian influence.

Just before the death of Abbas *Mirza* he had commanded a force which had besieged Herat, held at this period as an independent principality by Kamran *Mirza*, who had agreed to pay tribute and to raze the fortifications of Ghorian. He had, however, broken his pledges, and had, moreover, seized Sistan, which Persia coveted, and claimed as one of her provinces. No sooner was Mohamed Shah securely seated on his throne than he organized a large force for a second Afghan campaign. The position of the British was a delicate one, for it had been laid down in the Definitive Treaty that Great Britain should not interfere in case of war between Persia and Afghanistan. The British Minister, however, used every effort to delay the expedition, mainly to prevent Russian Agents from intriguing in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the British were also taking action from

India. In 1836 Alexander Burnes was sent to Kabul on a 'commercial' mission. He was well received by Dost Mohamed, the strongest of many brothers who had fought for the throne. At this period Kandahar was ruled by his brother Kuhandil Khan, who was intriguing against Dost Mohamed. Shortly after the arrival of Burnes, a Russian 'commercial' agent, Vitkavich, also reached Kabul. He had travelled from Persia via Kandahar, and had induced Kuhandil Khan to promise to co-operate with the Persians against Herat. Dost Mohamed agreed to send a force to the assistance of Herat, provided that the British would recognize him as Amir of Kabul and pay him a subsidy. He also wished for British help to secure Peshawar, then held by his brother, and was prepared to pay tribute for the province to the Sikh Government at Lahore as his brother had done. Burnes, who was most favourably impressed by Dost Mohamed, recommended Lord Auckland to agree to the Afghan Amir's proposals, but, most unfortunately, the Governor-General demanded the dismissal of Vitkavich and the renouncement by Dost Mohamed of his claims on Peshawar. Altogether Lord Auckland showed that he had failed to grasp the situation. Had Burnes's scheme of supporting the strong man of Afghanistan been carried out, a position favourable to the British would have been created—and there would have been no Afghan War. As a result of the failure of Burnes to secure reasonable terms for him, Dost Mohamed turned to Vitkavich, who promised that Russian help would be given to Persia to secure the capture of Herat. Vitkavich was, however, disowned by the Russian Government and nothing

came of his promises. Dost Mohamed ultimately threw himself into the scale against the British by making a treaty with Mohamed Shah against Kamran *Mirza*. To this pass had Lord Auckland's ineptitude brought matters.

In 1837 the Shah marched on Herat. Yar Mohamed Khan, the able Vizier of Kamran *Mirza*, had collected a large proportion of the crops into the city and had destroyed the remainder. He also burned every village within twelve miles of Herat. Ten thousand cavalry were instructed to keep the field and harass the enemy, and the various strongholds in the province were victualled. The fortifications of Herat were repaired, the ditch being cleaned out and deepened. By a stroke of good fortune a young English artillery officer, Eldred Pottinger, arrived on the scene, and soon became the life and soul of the siege. More than any one else Pottinger saved Herat.

The Shah believed in frightfulness, and the first prisoner that was captured was bayoneted in his presence, but otherwise operations dragged on month after month with no decisive results.

In the spring of 1838 Sir John McNeill, the British Minister, arrived in the Persian camp, and nearly persuaded the Shah to break off the siege. At the monarch's request he entered Herat, and drew up the draft of an agreement between the Afghan Prince and the Shah. This would probably have been agreed to, but, unfortunately, Count Simonich, the Russian envoy, arrived at this juncture and offered the services of a Russian officer. For a fortnight the Shah would not hear of the agreement.

He then at a private audience accepted it, but asked for an official letter from McNeill that the British Government would be angry if the siege were continued. He then demanded large sums of money for complying with the wishes of Great Britain. Upon learning that there would be no subsidies forthcoming, the angry Shah turned round and wrote an official letter to McNeill to the effect that his communication, written at the personal request of the Shah, was an attack on the sovereign rights of the King of Kings! The British Minister quitted the Persian camp, and while on his way to Teheran, received instructions to express to the Shah the strongest disapproval of His Majesty's Government at his conduct in connexion with Herat, and to state that its occupation would be regarded as a hostile act. Finally he was to point out that the island of Kharak had been occupied by British troops.

Shortly after the departure of McNeill, the Shah made a final effort to capture Herat. For six days its defences were battered, and a general assault was then delivered. However, the Afghan swordsmen drove back the besiegers, two thousand of whom were killed or wounded. The Shah was utterly dejected, and was consequently ready to listen to Colonel Stoddart, the bearer of McNeill's message. His answer was, 'We consent to the whole of the demands of the British Government'. He then broke up his camp and marched away, without coming to any agreement with the Vizier, whose triumph was complete. It is impossible to avoid sympathizing with the Persians. They considered themselves justified in regaining their lost provinces, they were guaranteed

against British interference by the Definitive Treaty, but yet the British did interfere and probably did prevent the capture of Herat. Mohamed Shah also felt that he had been humiliated in the eyes of his subjects and of the States of Central Asia.

The siege of Herat had reacted most unfavourably in India, where rumours of a Moslem invasion filled the bazars. Lord Auckland decided to make a counter-stroke and, without any justification, decided to oust Dost Mohamed and replace him by the refugee Shuja-ul-Mulk. The plan was to drive the Persians from Herat and then to expel Dost Mohamed from Kabul.

The distance from the frontier cantonment of Karnal to Herat was 1,500 miles, and it seems almost a mad scheme to have attacked two enemies at such a distance from the British base. Fortunately before the expedition started, news reached India that the siege of Herat had been raised. There was now no adequate reason for invading Afghanistan, but it was held that Dost Mohamed's hostility threatened the peace of India, and that he must be expelled.

The expedition reached Kabul practically unopposed, and Dost Mohamed subsequently surrendered. Two years later there was a reaction under Akbar Khan, son of Dost Mohamed. The brigade which garrisoned Kabul evacuated the cantonment in mid-winter, and was cut to pieces while retiring on Jalalabad. In the following year British columns, operating from Jalalabad and Kandahar respectively, united at Kabul, and the disaster was avenged. Auckland had left India, and his successor, Lord Ellenborough, agreed to Dost Mohamed being

released and restored to the throne. This concluded the most unjust and badly organized expedition that ever left India under British management. It was fortunate in suffering but one disaster.

After the retreat of Mohamed Shah it was decided to send a mission to Herat to make a treaty with its ruler. Major D'Arcy Todd, who had been with McNeill at the siege, was appointed to command the mission, which was received with every mark of respect by the Prince and his Vizier. A treaty was concluded, by the terms of which India paid a monthly subsidy of twenty-five thousand rupees, in return for which it was stipulated that all communications with Persia should be carried on through the British. As might have been expected, the Vizier was totally unable to refrain from intriguing, and before long Todd received proofs that he was sending friendly letters to the ' Asylum of the Universe '. This act was condoned, but the Vizier, who was a consummate scoundrel, finally became so hostile to the mission that it was withdrawn. It had, however, served a very useful purpose, both in preventing Mohamed Shah from openly breaking his agreement, and also in collecting valuable information about Central Asia.

Mohamed Shah was bitterly hostile to McNeill, his feelings being, quite naturally, very sore. He sent a special envoy to England with a document in which he complained bitterly of the tyranny he had suffered in his humane attempt to release Persian slaves, who were languishing in captivity at Herat. Lord Palmerston at first refused to receive the envoy, but finally did so. He then formulated his demands, which included the evacuation of all

Afghan strongholds, an apology, and a commercial treaty. The unsuccessful envoy 'ate many sticks' on this return; in other words he was severely bastinadoed. Fortunately for Persia, Mohamed Shah died a few years later. He had left the administration of the country to a thoroughly imcompetent and corrupt Vizier, who had brought it to the verge of bankruptcy and revolution.

There was no opposition to the accession of the heir, Nasir-u-Din, who was a youth of sixteen. He was Governor-General of Azerbaijan, and brought with him his adviser, *Mirza* Taki Khan, whom he appointed Vizier with the title of *Amir-i-Nizam*. The new Vizier was the most remarkable Persian of his generation, for he was not only capable and hard-working, but also honest, a virtue that even to-day can hardly be said to exist in Persia. He set to work to abolish the sale of justice and of appointments, and also the enormous number of pensions granted to court parasites and men of wealth; the embezzlement of the soldiers' pay, and other abuses were also taken in hand. Wonderful to say, he began to succeed, but his reforms raised up a host of enemies, among them the mother of the Shah; and finally, Nasir-u-Din, realizing his great influence, became afraid for his own safety, and executed his great minister.

During the early part of Nasir-u-Din's reign, Persia gave birth to a new religion. Its founder was born in 1820 at Shiraz, and was the son of a grocer. He studied at Kerbela, and at the age of twenty-four proclaimed himself the Bab or 'Gate' through which men might attain to knowledge of the Twelfth *Imam*. In the same year the Bab undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca, and

returned by way of Bushire with a considerable following. Encouraged by the support of his disciples, he determined to convert Shiraz to his doctrines, but was pronounced a madman and was imprisoned. His followers, however, increased to such an extent that the Persian Government became alarmed and, in 1850, the Bab was ordered to execution at Tabriz. In the great square he received the volley of the firing party, and when the smoke had cleared away he had disappeared. Had he gained the bazar, he might have escaped, and his religion would have been established by a miracle—as it would have been deemed. Unfortunately for himself he took refuge in the guard-room, whence he was taken out again and the sentence was carried out.

After his death the new doctrine spread far and wide, and its adherents displayed a spirit of reckless fanaticism and extreme cruelty. At Zenjan the chief *mulla* headed an outbreak and defied a large Persian army, buoyed up with the hope that the whole world would be the prize of success. The siege lasted for several months, and the crazy fanatics were massacred upon the capture of their stronghold. Two years later an attempt on the Shah's life resulted in cruel persecutions, which proved to the world the earnestness of the Babis and probably gained many converts.

The successor of the Bab fled to Baghdad, and ten years later he and his followers were transferred to Adrianople. While living in this city there was a split in the party, accompanied by assassinations. The Turkish Government interned the winner in the struggle at Acre. The present head of the religion, who is generally known

as Abdul Baha or 'The Slave of the Splendour', is a great personality, who has preached peace and goodwill among men in Europe and America, and is specially concerned with ethical questions. In Persia his followers are far behind their master, and are mainly concerned with questions of dogma, but even so, they are bound to be affected by the teaching and character of their leader.

During the generation that followed the treaty of Turkomanchai, Russia made great efforts to strengthen her position, not only in Persia itself, but in the states adjacent to Persia. She also determined to control the Caspian Sea. The Persian Government had proved itself to be incapable of repressing piratical raids by the Turkoman, whom she nevertheless claimed as her subjects, and in 1836 applied to Russia for naval assistance. The reply was to occupy the small island of Ashurada in the bay of Astrabad, and to develop it into a naval base. The Turkoman fought desperately to retain their right to plunder the coasts of Mazanderan and Gilan, and in 1851 surprised and captured the new base. Gradually, however, the Northern Power put down piracy, and by the end of the century it was a thing of the past.

Nasir-u-Din grew to manhood with the hope of recovering Herat for Persia, and thereby winning military glory. Yar Mohamed Khan had died in 1851, and was succeeded by his son, a dissolute youth who was even mentally deficient. His first act was to open up negotiations with Persia. The British reply to this was to impose a treaty on the Persian Government, by the terms of which that Power promised not to send troops into the

Herat province unless it was attacked from outside. This treaty was extremely irritating to the Persian Government, and probably led to an offensive correspondence on a trivial matter with the British Legation, which caused the Minister to break off relations and leave Persia at the end of 1855. Months passed without any communication from England, and the Persian *Sadr-i-Azam*, as the Vizier was termed, indulged in a somewhat premature triumph, and determined to satisfy the national aspirations by the capture of Herat. Meanwhile, as before, the British were taking action from India. Dost Mohamed, who, by the intended action of Persia, was liable to be thwarted in his design of uniting Herat to the other provinces of Afghanistan, readily concluded a treaty of perpetual peace and friendship.

Persia, however, forced the pace. Her nominee, a Sadozai *Sirdar*, seized Herat, put Said Mohamed to death, and invited Persia to take possession of the city. The delighted Shah immediately sent an army, and in the spring of 1856 Herat was occupied. The Sadozai *Sirdar* soon repented of his action and a rising resulted, but thanks to a French engineer, the possession of Herat was finally made good to the intense satisfaction of Persia.

But Great Britain was awake, and concluded a second treaty with Dost Mohamed, by the terms of which he was granted munitions and a subsidy so long as hostilities continued. This treaty, however, exercised little or no influence on the course of the war. Direct action was also taken most reluctantly, and war was declared against Persia.

Wiser councils prevailed than in the case of the previous crisis. The plan of marching on Herat with an allied Afghan army, or of an advance from Bandar Abbas was negatived, and it was decided to operate in the Persian Gulf and Karun Valley. Kharak was occupied, and from it a landing was made near Bushire, which was captured. A large Persian force was known to be encamped at Borazjun, some forty miles inland, and a British column under General Sir James Outram marched out to attack it. The enemy camp was found to be deserted, and as Outram possessed very little transport, he decided to blow up the Persian powder magazine and to retire. The Persian leader, encouraged by the British retirement, followed up the force and attacked it in the dark near Khushab, seven miles from Borazjun. The British cavalry and artillery advanced at dawn, the infantry being delayed by an accident to Outram, who was stunned by a fall from his horse. The Persians, who suffered some casualties, retreated in fair order, and were not pursued owing to the smallness of the force of cavalry, which had also suffered loss in a reckless charge on an enemy infantry regiment.

The next expedition was directed against Mohamera. Here the difficulties were much greater, as on both banks of the Karun heavy batteries had been mounted. However, the enemy kept no watch, and allowed a mortar battery erected on a raft to be towed upstream by night to a point in the Shatt-al-Arab opposite the Persian battery on the right bank of the Karun. In the morning, thanks to the fire of this mortar battery, aided by that of the steamers, the Karun was entered by the transports,

the troops were landed, and the Persian army fled, leaving their artillery, munitions, and camp to the victors.

Persia had already sued for peace, and by the treaty concluded in Paris in 1857 the Shah agreed to evacuate Herat and to recognize the independence of Afghanistan. He furthermore agreed that, in case of future disputes between the two Powers, recourse should be made to the good offices of Great Britain before an appeal to arms was made. No indemnity or concessions were asked for, and Persians were amazed at British magnanimity. The result justified the course adopted, as British relations were permanently improved, and Persians felt little or no bitterness at their defeats, which, of course, took place very far away from the capital, and were probably never fully realized.

The actual position, so far as Herat was concerned, was unsatisfactory. The Persian Government, forewarned of the terms of the treaty, appointed a Barakzai *Sirdar*, a refugee nephew and son-in-law of Dost Mohamed, governor of Herat, upon his agreeing to cause the *Khutba*, or Official Prayer, to be read in the name of the Shah. Consequently, Persia retained control of Herat, whose ruler visited Teheran to render homage to his gracious suzerain.

The Afghan question that had troubled Anglo-Persian relations for a generation was thus finally settled on terms that were favourable to Great Britain, while Persian feeling was gratified by the official recognition of her suzerainty.

The Envelopment and Awakening of Persia

During the nineteenth century, the position of Persia was enormously affected by the advance of the Russian Empire, and to a lesser but still considerable extent, of the Indian Empire. It is impossible to deal with these extremely important questions in detail, but to neglect them entirely would be to present an imperfect picture of the position of Persia in modern times.

The great advance of Russia began in 1839, and it is advisable to note her position at this period. To the west of the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus was still unsubdued, the final conquest of this great natural fortress not being completed until 1864. In Central Asia, with which we are more immediately concerned, the Russian boundary ran up the Ural River to Orenburg and thence to Troitzka and the Far East. The first movement southwards was made against Khiva in 1839–40. A powerful column started off from Orenburg on the long march of 900 miles across the steppes. Owing to exceptional cold, the camel transport was killed off and the column retired to Orenburg, before even reaching Khivan territory. In the autumn of 1840 a second expedition was being organized, but the Uzbeg chief submitted, and, by the terms of a treaty concluded in 1842, slave-dealing was abolished in Khivan territory and it was agreed that raiding would be sternly suppressed.

The next advance of Russia was to the Sea of Aral, which was reached in 1844. This inland sea was systematically

explored from a harbour that was fortified, and in 1847 the mouth of the Sir Daria was also occupied and a fort erected. This advance was the most important of all as, by following up the Sir Daria, Russia was able to penetrate into the heart of Central Asia and was equally able to use water transport.

By this occupation of the mouth of the Sir Daria, Russia was invading Khokand territory, and in 1853 the important fort of Ak Masjid, situated 220 miles up the river, was captured. In the following year an expedition penetrated up the valley of the Ili and a fort was built at Vernoe, which subsequently became the capital of the province of Semirechia. The Crimean War hindered all further advance for the time being, but Russia was able to make good the positions she had gained. In 1865 the advance was resumed and Tashkent was captured, thus completing the first stage of her great advance.

The turn of Bokhara came next. In 1865 the Amir took the offensive against the Russians, but was defeated decisively at Irgai. In 1868 the Bokharan army was again defeated and Samarcand was occupied. By the terms of the peace made with the defeated Amir, Samarcand was handed over to Russia. In 1876 the Khanate of Khokand was annexed. This advance, which brought Russia to Charjui on the Oxus, constituted the second stage of the advance.

Meanwhile, almost simultaneously, the conquest of Khiva had been taking place. With Russia established on the Sea of Aral, on the Sir Daria, and at Krasnovodsk, Khiva had no chance. Her capital was stormed in 1873,

and Russia annexed all the land on the right bank of the Oxus.

The last step of the advance concerned Persia most deeply. She had exercised vague but ineffectual control over the Turkoman, and Russia determined to supplant her. The base was, at first, the port of Chikishliar, whence Russia marched up the right bank of the Atrek, in spite of repeated protests from Teheran. In 1879 General Lomakin advanced to Geok Teppe, the entrenched camp of the Tekke Turkoman. His artillery inflicted terrible losses on the enemy, but his assault failed and he was forced to retreat with greatly diminished prestige. General Skobeleff was now entrusted with the task of crushing the Turkoman. Thanks partly to the help of a railway line he brought a powerful force to Geok Teppe in 1881. The Tekke fought desperately, but Skobeleff's artillery was overpowering and, helped by mining, gave the gallant enemy no chance. The Russians assaulted after the explosion of a mine, which levelled a large section of the mud wall and carried all before them. The Cossacks pursued relentlessly and the Turkoman country was won. As a result the Persian peasantry ceased to suffer from Turkoman raids, but the frontier line was drawn most unfavourably to Persia, which power suffered not only considerable loss of territory but a still greater loss of prestige. This concluded the advance of Russia.

Before dealing with the advance of the Indian Empire towards Persia, a few lines must be devoted to Afghan affairs. Dost Mohamed, as he became stronger, gradually began to assert his claims to the outlying provinces of

Afghanistan. In 1856 he seized Farrah, and in 1863 he, at last, fulfilled his chief ambition by the capture of Herat. The Persian Government viewed the change in the situation with dismay ; and although Dost Mohamed died a few days after his great success, the *Khutba* was no longer read in the name of the Shah of Persia at Herat.

We must now turn to the advance of the Indian Empire in Baluchistan. That province was ruled by Nasir Khan Brahui from 1739 to 1795. Under this capable chief something resembling law and order prevailed, but after his death it was divided up among petty chiefs and reverted to a condition of chronic anarchy.

Under Mohamed Shah Persia began to reassert her claims, and through the instrumentality of Ibrahim Khan of Bam district after district was annexed. In 1864, in connexion with the construction of an overland telegraph line, which will be referred to later in this chapter, Sir Frederic Goldsmid found that west of Gwadur there was no settled authority to deal with. This fact made it desirable to fix a boundary in the interests of the two states. A Commission was appointed, but owing to the hostility of the Persian representatives, no progress in the negotiations was made on the spot. Goldsmid, however, was able to obtain all the necessary information and also a survey of the proposed frontier. He then, as British Commissioner, gave his decision from a point east of Guattar up to Kuhak. After receiving Goldsmid's explanations, the Shah accepted this line.

The next task to be accomplished was far more difficult.

The province of Sistan, the delta of the river Helmand, had in recent years been occupied by the rulers of Kandahar or Herat. Persia objected to this, and after some years occupied in correspondence, Great Britain proposed arbitration, which was accepted.

The British Mission was treated with marked hostility by the Amir of Kain and the Persian Commissioner, but, again, the necessary surveys and inquiries were made, and Goldsmid returned to Teheran to give his award, by the terms of which the district on the right bank of the Helmand was awarded to Afghanistan and the more valuable district on the left bank to Persia. In 1891 the Helmand began to change its course, and when I founded the Sistan consulate in 1899, the main channel flowed considerably more to the west. This fact necessitated a second Commission under Colonel Sir Henry McMahon, which laid down the line as given by Sir Frederic Goldsmid with greater precision; incidentally it collected much valuable information about Sistan and the neighbouring districts.

Between Sistan on the north and the Guattar-Kuhak section on the south lay an area three hundred miles in length, which was mostly desert, but contained some date groves claimed both by Persia and Kharan, a desert province of Baluchistan. In 1896 a Boundary Commission was constituted under Sir Thomas Holdich, on which I had the honour to serve. By its award Kuhak became a Persian possession, while the bulk of the date groves were given to Kharan. In the northern section the ranges which ran down from Kuh-i-Malik-i-Sia, the southern point of the Sistan boundary, were made the

frontier. The only remaining undefined section of the eastern boundary of Persia is about two hundred miles of desert stretching from the north of Sistan to the Hashtadan plain. Actually there is no village or valuable grazing area in this district about which there is any dispute, although the Afghan nomads are inclined to encroach when the opportunity occurs.

The remaining boundary to be mentioned is that in the west. Here alone there have been no important changes during the last century. By the Treaty of Erzerum the frontier was generally agreed to, and in 1865, as the result of a survey which cost the British and Russian Governments hundreds of thousands of pounds, the boundary was held to lie in a strip of country twenty to forty miles wide. This unsatisfactory decision compelled the arbitrating powers to constitute a mixed Commission, and in October 1914, a day before the outbreak of hostilities between Russia and Turkey, the last boundary pillar was erected at the foot of Mount Ararat.

The result of the advance of the two Great Powers, from the north and east respectively, has been to envelop Persia within somewhat shrunken borders. At the same time, a policy of aggression would, in her case, only weaken her still more, and it is fair to point out that Great Britain in her dealings with Persia has throughout played a generous and in no sense an aggressive rôle, for she has realized that to secure peace on her borders, it is necessary to have friendly relations with her neighbours. With Russia it was far otherwise. Her agents on the spot were almost always supported from the capital, as they annexed the fertile khanates and thus added valuable

provinces to the Russian Empire, and gained wealth and distinction for themselves. It remains to add that few conquests have been made with greater ease and at smaller cost.

I now propose to give a brief account of the steps Persia has taken towards the utilization of some of the material and commercial advantages of the West. It is clear that no country can hope to progress without paying some attention to means of communication, and Persia has paid singularly little except so far as bridges and caravanserais are concerned, and the Kajar dynasty has not even kept in repairs the public works that it inherited from the Safavis. Thanks, however, to her position on the direct land route between Europe and India, Persia has become the fortunate recipient of a splendid service of telegraph lines. Actually it was intended by the British Government that the projected line should cross the Turkish empire to the head of the Persian Gulf, but owing to the slight control exercised by the Turkish authorities over the tribes to the south of Baghdad and also to the malarious climate, it was decided to provide an alternative line through Persia to connect at Bushire with the cable to be laid down the Persian Gulf. The Shah readily agreed to the British proposals and, in spite of strenuous resistance from the reactionary party and much trouble from local officials, a circuitous line running from Khanikin to Hamadan and Teheran and thence to Isfahan, Shiraz, and Bushire, was successfully completed in 1864.

By 1870 the Persians had realized the immense advantage of telegraphic communications, while the British officers

and non-commissioned officers had made themselves respected and liked. No difficulties were therefore raised when a line was built across the German and Russian empires to Tiflis, Tabriz, and Teheran, where it joined the already existing system. In 1901–3 a new line was constructed from Kashan to Yezd and Kerman and thence across the Lut to Karachi.

Persia not only derives material benefits from these telegraph lines in the form of royalties and receipts for local traffic, but her hold over the provinces is greatly strengthened by the construction of lines which are maintained in good working order. The part played by the British Telegraph officials is remarkable. Leading lonely lives in isolated stations and sometimes entirely alone, our fellow-countrymen have been not only a power for good and a civilizing agency, but in cases where accurate information has been valuable to the Persian Government, the services they have rendered have been of the first importance.

In an earlier part of this work, reference has been made to the military missions of Great Britain and France. After the breach with Mohamed Shah and the withdrawal of the British Mission, French officers appeared on the scene, to be followed later by Italian and again by French officers. In 1878 an Austrian mission took up the task, but without much success. Simultaneously the Russians organized a regiment on the Cossack model, the Tsar presenting rifles and guns, and this force gradually expanded into a brigade and, during the Great War, into a division. It was the only unit of the Persian army that possessed military value.

In 1872 the Shah granted a concession to Baron Julius de Reuter, a naturalized British subject, which was in effect a gigantic monopoly. This concession excited such intense opposition that the Shah, in somewhat arbitrary fashion, cancelled it. However, in 1889, the saddened de Reuter was granted a concession for the foundation of a bank to be called the Imperial Bank of Persia. It was started with a capital of one million sterling and was given the right to issue bank notes. At first the managers bought their experience somewhat dearly and the sudden depreciation of silver constituted a heavy loss, but gradually the bank made good and can claim to be specially valuable to the Persian Government and to Persian merchants. During the Great War it rendered services of extraordinary value to the British and Persian governments.

Not long after the opening of the Imperial Bank of Persia, the Russian Government founded the Banque d'Escompte de Perse, not as a commercial bank, but as a branch of the Russian Ministry of Finance. The methods pursued were similar to those followed in China, and consisted in using the bank as a means of political power. Its operations were not conducted on business lines and the annual deficits were serious. However, by lending large sums on real estate and by other, frequently underhand, methods the financial grip of Russia was fixed firmly on Persia.

19

The Constitutional Movement in Persia and its Failure

It is important to remember that the movement towards constitutional government in Persia is recent and, to some extent, fortuitous. The result of the construction of telegraph lines, missionary efforts as expressed in schools and hospitals, and travel by Persians of the upper and merchant classes, all affected Persia. At first the idea was to gain material advantages for Persia, but gradually it was evident that the old order was doomed. Nasir-u-Din was undoubtedly in favour of progress as a young man, but the failure of the attempt at constitutional government in Turkey, in 1876, frightened him and he thenceforth worked to keep Persia from dangerous new ideas. 'I want men around me who do not know whether Brussels is a city or a cabbage' was his frank avowal. He realized the extreme danger of pouring new wine into old wine-skins, and although his point of view was distinctly selfish, there is no doubt that Persia was not ripe for constitutional government. As Nasir-u-Din became an old man, his prestige and popularity waned, and men sneered when they heard that he was still adding to the number of his wives, who totalled fifty or more; incidentally they began to complain that the country was too poor to pay for the cost of the enormous royal establishments.

Nasir-u-Din was assassinated in 1896, and with his

death fear of the throne gradually disappeared. His successor Muzaffar-u-Din was a poor timid creature, the slave of bad health. He was also lavish to his courtiers, and led Persia down the broad road to destruction by borrowing money mainly from Russia for his extravagant tours in Europe. The protagonist in the movement against the old order was *Sayyid* Jamal-u-Din, a remarkable agitator and firebrand who gained great influence. He was rather a Pan-Islamist than a Constitutionalist, but he gained an immense following by denouncing the corruption of the Court and of the Vizier. He died at Constantinople, not long after the assassination of Nasir-u-Din.

Another reformer of quite a different class was Prince Malkom, the son of an Armenian. Educated in Paris, he gained considerable influence in Persia by means not altogether reputable. He was finally appointed Minister at the Court of St. James's. While holding this post he quarrelled with the Persian Prime Minister over the question of a concession for a lottery, which the Shah had sold to him and, later, wished to cancel. Malkom determined to fight his enemy through the instrument of propaganda, and started a newspaper for the purpose, in which he denounced the Prime Minister in scathing language. He advocated the assembling of a parliament for Persia and the drawing up of a fixed code of laws. His influence was great, even if his motives were not disinterested.

In 1905 the movement in favour of a constitution began. It commenced with a protest against Ayn-u-Dola, the Prime Minister, who was held to be responsible for

the extravagant journeys of the Shah and for the corrupt, inefficient, and oppressive government of the country. A number of merchants took *bast* or sanctuary at a a mosque in Teheran, where they were joined by some *mullas*. Driven out by orders of Ayn-u-Dola, the malcontents proceeded to the shrine of Shah Abdul Azim outside Teheran, where their numbers increased day by day. In vain the Shah sent his favourite to induce the *bastis* to disperse. They refused all his advances, and he was finally compelled to dismiss Ayn-u-Dola and to promise to convene an *Adalat Khana* or 'House of Justice'—it is to be noted that there was no question of a constitution at this point—and seeing that the *bastis* had dispersed, the Shah took no steps to carry out his promises, but collected a number of men pledged to support reactionary measures.

In the spring of 1906 he had a paralytic stroke and Ayn-u-Dola decided to embark on a policy of repression. He cut off supplies from the body of *bastis*, but permitted the *mujtahids* or 'doctors of law' to depart to Kum, which they did, threatening to leave Persia in a body unless the promises of the Shah were fulfilled. Simultaneously with this movement thousands took *bast* at the British Legation and declined to leave it until a National Assembly was granted. Finally the dying Shah consented. He opened the Assembly in October 1906, and died shortly afterwards.

Mohamed Ali Shah, who succeeded to the throne, was an Oriental despot of the worst type, unprincipled and avaricious. He was intensely hostile to the Constitution which, if successful, would limit alike his powers and his

lavish expenditure. He decided to recall the able, if unscrupulous, Atabeg-i-Azam, who had been dismissed by his father and gave him to understand that he expected him to overthrow the Constitution. In the Assembly there was a moderate and an extremist party, the latter having the greater influence. Atabeg tried to gain the consent of the Assembly through the moderates, to the raising of a loan, which the Shah badly wanted. It seemed as if he was gaining his ends when he was assassinated. The black deed was glorified and the fortieth day after the suicide of the assassin was observed as a public holiday.

The trend of public opinion was so clearly expressed that the Shah called on Nasir-ul-Mulk to form the new cabinet. His Highness, who had been educated at Oxford, was intellectually on a higher plane than any of his contemporaries and was perfectly honest. On the other hand he lacked driving power. In any case, he had no chance of carrying through the financial reforms which he was determined on, as the Shah had decided on taking summary action. Considering his position sufficiently strong, Mohamed Ali imprisoned Nasir-ul-Mulk. He then called out his household troops and some bands of roughs with the intention of closing the Assembly and arresting its leaders. But he suddenly hesitated and stayed his hand. As a result the Assembly, warned in time, collected armed volunteers. The telegraph department was entirely in its favour and transmitted messages from the provinces promising armed support. Bodies of men even started off from Tabriz and Kazvin to defend the Assembly. There was indeed a wave of enthusiasm

throughout Persia, and to this the Shah yielded, sending a Koran to the Assembly, sealed with an oath that he would observe the constitution.

Six months later, the Shah was more successful—for the time being. He bombarded the Baharistan, where the Assembly met, arrested, and executed some of its leading members and regained control of the government. The answer to this successful blow was a Nationalist revolution at Tabriz and the seizure of that city. In vain the Shah dispatched troops to crush the rebellion, for they merely effected a blockade, and when in the spring of 1909 the position of the European inhabitants became serious, Russian troops introduced food supplies and broke up the siege. The long defence at Tabriz and the fact that it occupied the attention of most of the available troops, permitted forces to be organized at Resht and Isfahan. At the former town, the fighting element was composed of Caucasian or Turkish moslems and Armenians. Their actual leader was a brave Armenian, Ephraim or Yeprem, although nominally Sipahdar, a Persian grandee, was in command. The Nationalists slowly worked their way towards Teheran, surprising Kazvin and taking up a position on the Karij River, twenty-five miles from the capital. Their numbers were small, but every week they received reinforcements from Baku.

At Isfahan, the Bakhtiari Chief, Sirdar-i-Asad, was the leader. He experienced much difficulty in uniting the chiefs of the various sections of the tribe, but finally he gained his object, and the Bakhtiaris marched north 2,000 strong, and after a skirmish with the Cossack Brigade gained touch with the Resht force.

The position of the Nationalists was difficult, as Russia had landed 3,000 troops at Enzeli, and it was essential that they should be met with a *fait accompli* before they reached Kazvin. Consequently the combined force, avoiding the lines of the Cossack Brigade, entered Teheran without encountering any serious resistance. There was some fighting in the streets, but the Shah, who was in camp in a garden outside the city, soon threw up the sponge and took refuge at the Russian Legation, where he was formally deposed by the victors. It is to the credit of the Nationalists that disorders were speedily repressed and that there was not a single outrage against Europeans. The Russian troops gradually withdrew and Persia was left free to manage her own affairs. Had her statesmen displayed capacity and honesty, the new order might have proved a blessing to the country, but the ship of state was steered and manned by thoroughly inefficient and corrupt officers and men.

Before narrating the dismal failure of constitutional government in Persia, a brief reference must be made to the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907. The victories of Japan had a chastening effect on the statesmen of the Neva and made them ready to come to terms with Great Britain. These feelings were warmly reciprocated by the British, and were embodied in an Agreement which represented a comprehensive and final effort to deal with Anglo-Russian rivalries in Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet. In this work I deal only with the Agreement so far as it effected Persia. It began with a solemn declaration of the two Governments to respect the 'strict independence and integrity of Persia', and went

on to stipulate that each of the two States binds itself to seek no concession of any kind whatever in regions conterminous to the frontier of the other. The spheres were then defined in order to avoid misunderstandings. That of Russia was demarcated by a line starting from Kasr-i-Shirin (on the Baghdad–Hamadan route), included Isfahan and Yezd, and ended on the Persian frontier at the point where the Russian and Afghan frontiers intersected. The line marking the British sphere started from a point on the Afghan frontier to the east of Birjand, and passed through that town, Kerman and Bandar Abbas.

The sphere of Russia thus included Northern and Central Persia, while Great Britain only reserved a strip of semi-desert country bordering on the Afghan and Baluch frontiers. It was a mistake not to have included the rest of Southern Persia in the British sphere, as there alone would commercial concessions be sought. The enormous developments in oil in the Karun Valley have alone proved that this view, which I strongly represented at the time, was correct. Actually, had the Great War not broken down, Germany would inevitably have gained a strong footing in the Karun Valley.

Persia naturally disliked the Anglo-Russian Agreement. She had based her policy on the rivalry of the two Great Powers, and viewed with dismay the new order by which, in her opinion, they had agreed to dismember her. And her view was correct, for Russia undoubtedly aimed at the annexation of Northern Persia, and we, in self-defence, would ultimately have been obliged to take over the southern provinces. On the other hand our policy was honest, and while aiming at coming to terms with Russia,

was entirely benevolent so far as Persia was concerned. The success of the German propaganda during the Great War was undoubtedly due in some measure to this Agreement. On the other hand, but for its conclusion, Russia would not have co-operated as loyally as she did with Great Britain.

Mohamed Ali was succeeded by his son, a lad of twelve, who ascended the throne as Sultan Ahmad Shah, with a respected old Kajar chief as Regent. A ministry was formed in which the victors held the chief portfolios. The ex-Shah, after much bargaining, agreed to accept a pension of £16,600, and left for Odessa, his departure clearing the air.

Persia at this juncture had every chance of 'making good', but the Nationalists broke up into two parties, the Extremists (now misnamed 'Democrats') being bitterly hostile to the Moderates. Sirdar-i-Asad laid traps for Sipahdar and, generally speaking, there was confusion, the Extremists pushing to the front by their activity, supported by assassination.

Under the auspices of Sirdar-i-Asad, an Extremist Cabinet was formed. It was hoped that the responsibility of office would make the party turn its attention to the crying needs of Persia. Far from this, it continued its assassinations and intrigues. Moreover, it assumed a hostile attitude towards Russia, which resulted in the Foreign Minister, Nawab Husayn Kuli Khan, being obliged to resign.

The old Regent died in 1910, and the question as to who should be his successor caused much heart-burning. Nasir-ul-Mulk was, by far, the most suitable man for

the post, but he was absent from Persia, and did not attempt to gain election through intrigue or corruption. However, public opinion was deeply stirred, and finally Nasir-ul-Mulk was elected and took up the thankless and dangerous post, to the great satisfaction of all who wished Persia well. His chief rival Mustaufi-ul-Mamalik was obliged to resign the premiership by the same force of public opinion, and Sirdar-i-Asad left for Europe.

The new Regent had hardly taken up the duties of his post when it was rumoured that the ex-Shah intended to effect a landing in the Turkoman country near Astrabad and make an effort to recover the throne. The two legations disbelieved these rumours, but in 1911 the Shah travelled across Russia, chartered a ship at a Caspian port, and landed at Gumesh Tappa, near Astrabad. Had he possessed courage he would probably have regained the throne, as not only was there a panic at Teheran but there was a strong party in his favour, including the majority of the Russian officials. The Shah sent a force towards Teheran, but a machine gun worked by a German instructor threw the Turkoman into a panic, and they fled shamefully. Salar-u-Dola, his brother, who had advanced from the direction of Kermanshah, was also defeated. Finally, owing to British persistance in refusing under any conditions to consider the question of Mohamed Ali's return to the throne, the Pretender retired to Russia.

The financial difficulties of the Persian Government were great and ever increasing. It was therefore decided to apply to America for help, with the result that Mr. W. Morgan Shuster reached Persia, with a staff, in

1911. The financial adviser investigated matters, and speedily came to the conclusion that the Augean stable of corruption could only be cleansed by extraordinary powers. These powers were readily bestowed by the Assembly, and Shuster, realizing that the 'Democrats' possessed most of the power, threw in his lot with them. He showed great energy but, unfortunately, an almost equally great lack of tact. Russia, on the look out for offence, was a formidable opponent, and Shuster started badly by refusing to pay the usual calls on the Legations. He was strongly advised by the Regent not to interfere with the Customs Department that was well managed by its Belgian officials, but he immediately started his operations with this department.

He engaged a British officer of strong pro-Persian and anti-Russian proclivities to organize a Treasury gendarmerie for service all over Persia. The Russian Legation objected, and the appointment was finally cancelled by the officer in question being ordered to return to India.

The Russian Government was determined to get rid of Shuster, and the opportunity soon presented itself. The Persian Government decided to confiscate the property of Shua-u-Saltana, brother of the ex-Shah, who had joined him in his recent attempt to regain the throne. Shuster directed his Treasury gendarmes to seize Shua's palace, but the Russian Consul-General, under the inadequate pretext that Shua owed money to the Russian Bank, sent two of his secretaries with ten Russian Cossacks to anticipate Shuster's action. This party arrested the Treasury gendarmes upon their arrival on the scene. On the following day Shuster

dispatched a much stronger body of Treasury gendarmes to the spot, which evicted a small body of Persian Cossacks which they found in possession. The gendarmes were stated to have pointed their rifles at two Russian officials who passed by, but this charge was denied. It would appear that the Russian authorities were entirely in the wrong in the first instance in taking the matter into their own hands and seizing on Shua's property, more especially as he happened to enjoy Turkish protection. But Shuster's folly in sending a large force to turn out a guard posted by the orders of the Russian Consulate-General spoilt the case of the Persian Government. As was inevitable, the Russian Government presented an ultimatum which had to be accepted and Shuster was dismissed. His failure was most regrettable, and the only consolation is, that had he been tactful and suitable in every way, Russia would, sooner or later, have found means by which to oust him.

In no instance was the policy of Russia more sinister than in the bombardment of the Shrine at Meshed, which may justly be termed the 'Glory of the Shia World'. I was Consul-General in Khorasan at the time, and had watched with deep misgiving the intrigues of my Russian colleague, who worked hard in favour of the ex-Shah. He even went so far as to encourage Yusuf Herati, a noted *agent provocateur*, to carry on a propaganda from the shelter of the Russian consulate. In due course this agent went to the shrine, where he collected large crowds whom he harangued. The Russian Consul-General thereupon reported that the lives of Russian subjects were in danger and brought in a con-

siderable force of Russian troops. The respectable inhabitants of Meshed worked hard to avoid giving the Russians any pretext for taking military action, but it was clear that they had determined to strike a blow, and would do so with or without good reason. Their agent, who frequently telephoned to the Russian Consulate, continued his propaganda and collected larger and larger crowds, mainly composed of pilgrims, and one morning the Russians opened fire on the shrine. The Russians then stormed it, killing and wounding a large number of innocent pilgrims and citizens, for their own agents took cover and were unharmed. At night they were escorted out of the city through a gate which was guarded by Russian Cossacks. Subsequently the chief Agent wrote to me, detailing the valuable services he had rendered the Russians, and complained bitterly of the inadequacy of his reward. Possibly my colleague heard about this letter. In any case he instigated the Persian authorities to take action, and Yusuf Herati was captured and immediately shot. His captor then paraded Meshed in a carriage full of roses, holding up the corpse for the edification of the Meshed mob. This outrage cost Russia dear, as the Persians hated her intensely and will continue to do. We too as the allies of their enemies incurred much odium.

In the years that preceded the Great War, the state of Persia became more and more unsatisfactory. Anarchy became more serious as time passed, and the Government gradually lost control over the more distant provinces, Persian Baluchistan, for example, ceasing entirely to pay revenue or to receive a governor. In the north, Russia

began to absorb her sphere of influence by protecting rich landowners and merchants, by collecting the revenue due to the Persian Government from her 'subjects', and by buying land at nominal prices, which land in some cases was cultivated by Russian immigrants. The collapse of the Northern Power during the Great War gave Persia one more chance of working out her own salvation.

20

Persia and the Great War, 1914–16

No power was less prepared to meet the obligations and sacrifices imposed by the World War than Persia, and no power exhibited such impotence in protecting its boundaries and its subjects. To the mere onlooker it seemed unlikely that such a remote country would be involved in the great struggle, whereas, as I propose to show, Persia heard the tramp of armed men in many of her provinces, and suffered severely from the total inability of her government to protect its loudly proclaimed neutrality.

To turn our attention in the first place to Azerbaijan, its north-west province, even before the war Turkey and Russia fenced for advantage of position at the expense of Persia, as the power which marched across that country not only avoided the high ranges which run from Ararat to the Black Sea, but outflanked its adversary. There was therefore no surprise felt when, upon the outbreak of hostilities, a Russian force crossed the northern part of Azerbaijan and drove the Turks back on Van. The

Kurds rallied to the side of their fellow-Moslems, but after capturing Tabriz, were defeated by a Russian detachment.

The main attack by the Turks on the Russian position protecting Kars caused the forces on both sides to be withdrawn to this area, and after the Turkish disaster at Sarikamish, Russia held the important town of Urumia and its neighbourhood until the fatal collapse of her army in 1917.

We must now study south-west Persia, which also became the scene of operations very early in the war. The Government of India, anticipating the outbreak of hostilities, had dispatched a brigade of troops to the Bahrein Islands, while a cruiser patrolled the Shatt-al-Arab. The main cause for anxiety on the British side were the valuable, but vulnerable, oil refineries of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, situated on the island of Abadan, a few miles below the point where the Karun flows into the Shatt at Mohamera. The prompt action of the British, which resulted in the capture of Basra, assured the safety of the oil refineries, but there were the wells at Maydan-i-Naftun, at the foot of the Bakhtiari mountains, and the pipe-line 150 miles long, which were equally enemy objectives, the latter having been breached in many places by fanatical tribesmen, incited by German propaganda. To protect these valuable interests a brigade was dispatched to Ahwaz, where it faced a strong Turkish force until the 12th division swept the enemy out of Persian soil, and almost into the arms of Sir Charles Townshend, who captured Amara before the retreating Turks were aware of the fact. The British maintained

their position at Ahwaz, the pipe-line was repaired, an the priceless liquid fuel was supplied to the British nav as far west as the Mediterranean.

Midway between the Russians in the north-west an the British in the south-west, the main route into Persi runs from Baghdad across the parallel ranges leading u to the plateau, and this route was free for the enemy t use. In April 1915, a force of Turkish levies began a advance on Kermanshah, driving out the British an Russian Consuls. The interior of Persia was then overru by parties of Germans and Austrians well provided wit arms and British sovereigns bearing the date 1872 evidently taken from the famous Spandau Tower. Thes men enlisted levies and swept across Central and Southern Persia, driving out the British and Russian colonies Nor did they hesitate to use assassination, as a letter wa intercepted in which Seiler, a German official, boaste of having organized an attack on the British Consul-General at Isfahan, who was wounded; less fortunate, the Russian Vice-Consul was murdered. Everywhere success-ful propaganda was carried on, and their Persian dupes were induced to believe that the Germans had become converts to Islam, and that the Kaiser had made the pilgrimage to Mecca and was now termed Haji Wilhelm! The most successful German Agent was Wassmuss. He organized a strong pro-German party in the country behind Bushire, which forced us to increase the garrison of that Persian port; he also arranged for the entire British colony at Shiraz to be seized and kept imprisoned in the neighbourhood of Bushire; the British Vice-Consul at Shiraz was assassinated. At the end of 1915

there were no British officials or merchants in Central or Southern Persia, and only at the ports were they able to maintain themselves. In the north the position was satisfactory. Russian troops had been landed at Enzeli in the autumn to meet the menace of the Central Powers, who converted their Legations into standing camps swarming with levies and escaped prisoners of war. The enemy ministers quitted Teheran as the Russian troops approached the capital, and they hoped that they would be able to jockey Persia into the war on their side, as they had done so successfully in the case of Turkey. On November 15 there was a trial of strength. The Ministers of the Central Powers warned the Shah that Teheran would be stormed by the Russian troops and that he would be arrested, if not executed. They implored him to flee to a village, six miles to the south of the capital, where they had collected their motley forces. They had some of the leading members of the Cabinet and many of the Deputies in their pay, and had every reason to believe that the Shah would follow them. But the British and Russian ministers cogently pointed out to His Majesty that he ran a great risk of losing his throne if he broke his neutrality by throwing himself into the arms of the Central Powers, and assured him that the Russians would not enter Teheran. Finally the Shah realized the true position of affairs and decided to remain at the capital. The Russian troops were subsequently used to disperse the levies of the Central Powers which were raiding in every direction, and, by the end of the year, the Cossacks were in occupation of Kashan and threatening Isfahan, which was held by pro-German Bakhtiari tribesmen.

The year 1916 saw the ebb and flow of battle up and down the historical route of Western Persia. At first success lay with the Turks who, shortly after the battle of Ctesiphon and the retreat of the British to Kut-al-Amara, marched into Persia as far as the neighbourhood of Hamadan. But the Russians, with their *morale* strengthened by the splendid feat of arms at Erzerum, soon advanced and drove the enemy off the plateau. The fall of Kut changed the military situation and freed some 18,000 Turks with 54 guns for an invasion of Persia. Driving the numerically inferior force of Russians before them, they captured Kermanshah and then Hamadan. The Russians took up a strong position to the north, covering Kazvin and threatening a force marching on Teheran. This was the situation in September, and there was no important change until the end of the year.

In the south the British took steps to restore the unfortunate position of the previous year. In March 1916, I was sent to Bandar Abbas with three other officers, charged with the task of raising a Persian force, termed the South Persia Rifles. British prestige was low, and the fall of Kut made it still lower, but gradually matters improved. Kawam-ul-Mulk, hereditary mayor of Shiraz and chief of the Arab tribes of the province, had been driven out of Shiraz during the disturbances which followed the seizure of the British colony. His enemies had been able to occupy Shiraz, supported as they were by the gendarmerie which, under the influence of its Swedish officers, joined the Germans and afforded them valuable support. Kawam visited Sir Percy Cox, the

able British Resident, and was given some old Turkish guns, while I provided him with rifles and ammunition. This modest assistance was magnified into several batteries manned by British gunners and untold quantities of munitions, and so potent is propaganda in Persia that Kawam's enemies submitted and joined him in defeating the gendarmerie, which fled back to Shiraz. Kawam was unfortunately killed by a fall from his horse, but his son restored the authority of the Persian Government at Shiraz. I remained two months at Bandar Abbas, during which period satisfactory progress was made in recruiting a regiment. I was then given a force of 500 rifles of the 124th Baluchis, a squadron of cavalry, and a section of mountain guns, and marched inland to restore the situation at Kerman, distant 180 miles. The parties of the Central Powers, which were at Kerman and Bam, soon took the alarm and fled westwards into Fars, where Kawam was able to capture them. The column reached Kerman, where it was warmly welcomed by all classes, among whom I had lived for many years as consul. Upon its arrival the Telegraph and Bank officials who had accompanied it re-opened their respective offices, and as the anarchist elements which had made life and property unsafe had disappeared when the Germans fled, Kerman soon settled down into its customary state of tranquillity. Recruiting was commenced for the South Persia Rifles, and thanks to the support of the landowners, who fully appreciated the change from anarchy to security, the Kerman brigade was gradually formed and became a valuable force.

After a halt of about six weeks the column marched

in August to Yezd, distant 220 miles, to find that the British colony had recently returned. The original intention was for it to proceed direct to Shiraz, the storm-centre of Southern Persia, but the Turkish advance to Hamadan had been followed by the dispatch of a body of levies, stiffened by a battery of artillery, and Turkish regular infantry towards Isfahan, which was only held by 600 Russian Cossacks with two field guns. Strong appeals were made to me to proceed to their assistance, and this I was instructed to do, the distance of 190 miles being rapidly traversed, as alarming messages were received on the march. Actually the Turks reached a village about 80 miles from Isfahan, but never advanced any further. Possibly the strength of my little column was considerably exaggerated, and made the risk appear too great. The people of Isfahan, including the Armenian colony, greeted us with much warmth. For the Armenians, a Turkish occupation would have meant flight or a massacre. The British and Russian colonies, which had only recently returned, would also have been obliged to set out on their wanderings once again. During the halt at Isfahan, the trade route to Ahwaz was reopened by an attack on the robber who had closed it, and casualties were inflicted on his gang. Some new uniform was also made for the troops who were in rags. It must be remembered that we had no lines of communication, and relied on the country for almost everything.

In October the column started off on the long march of 326 miles to Shiraz. The route was deserted so far as caravans were concerned, and the villages were suffering from lack of purchasers for their supplies. Everywhere

we heard accounts of the serious depredations inflicted by the nomads, who had taken advantage of the disturbed situation to plunder far and wide. They had left the cold uplands for the low-lying pastures of the *Garmsir*, or ' Hot Country ', and so there was a temporary cessation of raiding, and also little fear of an attack. The column finally reached Shiraz in November, thereby completing a march of 1,000 miles across the heart of Persia.

21

Persia and the Great War, 1917–18

Upon entering the province of Fars, I inspected various posts held by the Swedish gendarmerie. The men were half starved, had received no pay for months, and seemed to have retained little sense of discipline. The Persian officers impressed me less unfavourably, but, in view of the pro-German action of the gendarmerie, the position was difficult. The Persian Government did not authorize me to take over this derelict body of 3,000 men, which it was unable to pay, equip or discipline, but would not be opposed to my doing so. I had no staff to deal with such a big body of men, but, unless I took it over, the force would break up, and many of the men would join the numerous raiding bands that were directly and indirectly destroying the sedentary population. To give instances, inquiries made proved that the number of camels and sheep owned by the villagers in Fars had been reduced to one-quarter during the last two decades, and probably the population had decreased by fifteen to

twenty per cent. The boldest course is sometimes the wisest, and the day after my arrival at Shiraz I addressed the Persian officers, explained to them that I was raising the South Persia Rifles for the Persian Government and with their consent, and that I had decided to take over the gendarmerie in Fars. The majority were heartily in favour of an arrangement which secured pay, rations, clothing, and fair treatment, but a strong minority was against the change, and unfortunately it included the most active officers. In the spring of 1917 an adequate staff reached me, and the way British officers and non-commissioned officers set to work to make the force of military value was admirable, every one working as if success depended on him alone.

Among the questions which had to be settled was that of the German and Austrian officers, who were confined at Shiraz. They were able to intrigue with the Persians and with our enemies, and were also a cause of grave anxiety to the Persian authorities. Finally they were sent north to Isfahan under strong escort, although it was a serious risk to divide the small column. The Russians forwarded them to Baku. Among their papers was a watercolour sketch in which the Persian was depicted as being descended from a pig, a fox, a hyena, a hare, and a vulture; an egg of the carrion-eating bird was cracked, showing a Persian inside! So much for German friendship for Persia!

By far the most important question that confronted us in Fars was that of our relations with the Kashgais, the Arabs, and other nomad tribes. Their numbers and power were very great, the Kashgais being 130,000 strong

and the Arabs 70,000 strong. Moreover, as they moved in the spring from the low-lying country near the Persian Gulf to the uplands of Fars and again returned in the autumn, they penetrated to every part of the province, and no village was safe from their depredations. These tribes were hostile to us, for the simple reason that they looked upon raiding as a legitimate occupation, and realized that we were there to stop raiding. Solat-u-Dola, the *Ilkhani* or Paramount Chief of the Kashgais, was the 'Uncrowned King' of Shiraz. If a Governor-General showed hostility towards him, his bands blockaded Shiraz by preventing supplies reaching its bazars. Scarcity produced riots—and the Governor-General was dismissed. Solat collected revenue in full from his tribesmen, but none of it ever left his hands: so he was very rich. Fortunately for us he was very mean. Kawam, the chief of the Arabs, was an educated Shirazi, who was anxious to stop raiding, although he was obliged to wink at it to some extent. Solat, on the other hand, lived with his tribe and was arrogant, suspicious, and unstable. We were always on good terms with Kawam, with whom we enjoyed many a day's shooting, whereas we only met Solat once, and realized that he was likely to be our enemy. However, during 1917, at a period when we were busy opening up lines of communication from Bandar Abbas, organizing the South Persia Rifles, and putting down robbery on the main caravan routes, Solat did not oppose us openly. We took advantage of this favourable state of affairs to punish the small tribes which were proved guilty of raiding, and by the end of 1917, robbery ceased on the main routes, and the Persian landowners

acknowledged that Fars had not been so peaceful for a decade.

Unfortunately our success was merely temporary, for in the spring of 1918, at a time when the British and French armies were being driven back, and it seemed to many as if victory was within the grasp of Germany, the Kashgai chief headed a confederacy whose avowed intention was to annihilate the British force. The Persian Government was undoubtedly influenced by the position in France, and the Bakhtiari Premier distinctly encouraged Solat, who genuinely believed that he was acting in accordance with the wishes of the Persian Government, which, for once, were identical with his own. Fortunately the British column at Shiraz had been reinforced and was 2,200 strong, but one-third of the men were recruits. Lewis guns were received just in time to be made use of, and probably saved the situation. The forces at the disposal of Solat consisted of some 6,000 picked warriors, and this number was reinforced and remained at 8,000 fighting-men throughout the period of hostilities. The South Persia Rifles slightly outnumbered the British troops at Shiraz, and as the Persian Government proclaimed the force to be 'a threat to Persian independence and integrity', it became untrustworthy and, for a while, constituted a danger to us.

Kawam had 2,000 Arabs in and about Shiraz. They were ready to attack the losers, if they did not take a hand in the game before the result was known; in any case they added materially to our anxieties, besides consuming supplies of all kinds. The Shirazis were hostile to us, the *mullas*, in some cases, preaching *jihad*, or Holy War.

Placards were posted up by night threatening us with death.

The supply question caused continual anxiety. The harvest was ripe, but neither reaped nor stored. Forage was always a great difficulty, and we only just managed to feed our horses and mules, stocks being continuously low.

We occupied a belt of gardens, surrounded by bullet-proof mud walls, and had gradually strengthened this cantonment by digging wells, by opening up internal communications, and by building towers.

Hostilities commenced early in May. The first incident was the carrying off of some transport belonging to the post of the South Persia Rifles at Khaneh Zinian, twenty-six miles to the west of Shiraz. The raiders were seized, whereupon their *Kalantar* threatened to attack the post unless they were released. This threat was carried out, but reinforcements from Shiraz appeared on the scene and cleared the tribesmen from the neighbourhood, inflicting a few casualties. Solat, after a heated correspondence on his side, declared war on us, alleging that he had the orders of the Persian Government to drive us out of Fars. Most of the troops were absent punishing some raiding tribes, who had agreed to join the enemy, but the day after their return, they marched out to take up the challenge of the Kashgais. They found them at Deh Shaykh, about sixteen miles to the west of Shiraz, and, for fourteen hours, the gallant Indians steadily drove the brave Kashgais back, defeating repeated ugly rushes mainly with Lewis-gun fire. Towards evening the enemy, whose losses were heavy, became demoralized,

and, after shelling Solat's camp on the banks of the Kara Agach, the tired troops occupied it, the enemy disappearing in clouds of dust. The Kashgais had made so sure of capturing the column that they had divided up the spoil beforehand, even quarrelling over the subject of the superb gun mules! They considered themselves invincible on their own ground, and their seven hundred casualties were a salutary lesson. Unfortunately for us the Kashgais in their retreat met large reinforcements, and, before long, had returned to the neighbourhood of Shiraz, while their allies from Kazerun occupied the garden quarter of Shiraz, which stretches for miles up the valley. The enemy party in Shiraz had nearly made up its mind to attack the cantonment during the absence of the column, and it appeared unwise to give it a second chance. Moreover, what with casualties and cholera our numbers were lessened. We therefore allowed the enemy to come close to Shiraz, so as to be able to fight them in the level valley. As may be imagined, we had to guard against every conceivable kind of treachery, and we heard that it was intended to make a combined attack on us on June 17, the Shirazis promising to rise and attack the cantonment in force during the absence of the column. A day before this date, the column sallied out into the valley, moving out slowly and driving the Kazerunis in front of it. At noon it had reached Ahmadabad, a village about four miles from the cantonment. It then began to withdraw and, as anticipated, the Kashgais came galloping down in great force. They offered splendid targets for the guns, and the column finally returned to the cantonment after a second

successful action. On the following day the rising in Shiraz took place. Solat was consoling his tribesmen, but attacks were made on the South Persia Rifles and any men suspected of being friendly to us. The bazars were shut and supplies ceased to come in. It was clear that the crisis had been reached. It seemed tactically unsound to divide up our slender forces any more, as large guards had to be posted at night to hold positions in the lines of the South Persia Rifles. On the other hand, the Shirazis believe that the occupation of three high buildings in their city dominates it: it was therefore decided to take the risk, and at 2 a.m. these key-positions were occupied. The result was better than we expected, for when, in the morning, the Shirazis saw that the British held these buildings, they considered that we had won the game. Accordingly, they hastened to re-open their shops, while the hostile element went into hiding.

The tide had begun to turn, and British success was secured by inducing the Persian Governor-General to appoint a new Paramount Chief of the Kashgais in the person of a brother of Solat. Kawam too declared for the British, and intrigues began which resulted in a section of the Kashgai tribe breaking away from Solat. The column immediately marched out and attacked. On this occasion the Kashgais fought gamely, but their numbers were considerably reduced, and they were soon fleeing, pursued by the new Paramount Chief and Kawam. Solat made a stand at Firuzabad, several marches to the south, but was again defeated, and fled with only a small band of faithful adherents. Three months later he

again collected a force and besieged the new Chief, but the column came to the rescue and inflicted such a heavy blow on him that he fled weeping and has been a refugee ever since. That night both victors and vanquished were laid prostrate by the deadly influenza epidemic, which raged with appalling severity in the province of Fars. No less than 18 per cent. of the Indian troops died within a few days and the losses among the Persians were heavier ; altogether it was a terrible experience, but we felt thankful that the epidemic did not break out until the night after the final and decisive defeat of the Kashgais.

At Bushire the garrison under Major-General J. A. Douglas was increased during the summer, and in the autumn operations were commenced for opening up the route to Shiraz. The distance was only 180 miles, but no trade-route crosses more difficult country, for, in summer, the heat near the coast is terrific, while the cold on the many passes in midwinter is extreme. The Bushire column suffered but slightly from the influenza, but it delayed operations. The force used, including non-combatants, was 20,000 strong, and the chief difficulties were supplies and communications. There was no organized resistance. A light railway was laid for thirty-seven miles across the level plain to Borazjun, from which centre carts plied for another twelve miles to Daliki. From this village an extremely difficult belt of country was entered and excellent work was done in the way of making a good camel track. In January, Kazerun was occupied, the Shiraz column co-operating. The beneficent activities of the British were continued, and when they

withdrew in the spring of 1919, a motor-car could run, although not very easily, from Bushire to Shiraz. To appreciate the difficulty of the task that was accomplished, it is necessary to know the country. Failing this, the following extract from Pierre Loti is to the point : ' Il est fou pour sûr mon palefrenier qui fait mine de grimper là, qui pousse son cheval dans une espèce d'escalier pour chèvres, en prétendant que c'est le chemin ! . . . Or c'est bien le chemin en effet, cet escalier inimaginable.' The Indian troops under Douglas have changed all that.

Within my limits it is impossible to do more than refer to the exploits of Major-General L. C. Dunsterville, who, in 1918, headed a mission intended to stem the enemy advance in the Caucasus, by helping the Armenians and Georgians to defend their own hearths. Actually the Mission held Baku against the Turks for six weeks and was then forced to evacuate that town. The connexion of the force with Persia was owing to the fact of its lines of communication running from Baghdad to Kermanshah and Hamadan and thence northwards to Kazvin and Enzeli. Dunsterville played an important part in Persia, for, owing to him, Kuchik Khan, the ' Jangali ' leader, who collected a large following in Gilan, was prevented from marching on Teheran, where he would probably have overthrown the dynasty, and brought Persia into the World War on the side of the Central Powers. He also watched the Turks in Azerbaijan and, to some extent, imposed himself on them, in spite of the scanty forces at his disposal.

The above account of Persia during the World War

shows clearly how impotent she was to defend her own boundaries, and how her inability to do so laid heavy burdens on Great Britain and Russia, and compelled those powers to throw troops into the country or else permit the enemy to use it as a base for an attack on India with its frontier state of Afghanistan. Persia undoubtedly suffered in her western and north-western provinces from the ebb and flow of the contending forces, which caused loss of live-stock and supplies. Against this may be set the enormous expenditure by the belligerents which was distributed among all classes. Gold, which was rarely seen in the bazars before the Great War, became almost a drug. Of greater importance to Persia were the remarkable improvements effected in her communications. The Kermanshah–Hamadan route was made into a metalled road, and now allows cars to run from Enzeli to Baghdad. In the south, the splendid road-making between Bushire and Shiraz has already been referred to, while I opened up routes for cars with one short break from Bandar Abbas to Isfahan via Saidabad, Niriz, and Shiraz; altogether cars could run over more than one thousand miles of roughly prepared tracks in Southern Persia. Finally by breaking the power of the Kashgais the authority of the Persian Government has been restored in Southern Persia, and the peasant has been encouraged to plant larger crops with better hopes of reaping what he sows.

22

Persia after the Armistice

The Armistice at first bewildered Persian statesmen. In the spring of 1918 they thought that Germany had victory within her grasp, and they took great care to trim their sails accordingly. When Germany fell and their old friend Great Britain proved to be the victor, they all congratulated her representative warmly—and thought out what advantages they might derive from the new state of affairs.

Their plans were quickly translated into action, and, early in 1919, a Persian Delegation reached Paris to lay the claims of their country before the Peace Conference. These claims deserve close study, if only as showing Persian ambitions and mentality. They were divided into three parts, under the heads ' Political ', ' Juridical ', and ' Economic Independence '. Under the first part the abrogation of the Anglo-Russian agreement was demanded. This had already been conceded so far as Great Britain was concerned. But other demands, such as the withdrawal of consular escorts and abolition of consular courts, were unreasonable. Europeans living in Persia suffer in local disturbances, frequently because an attack on a European gives the local governor, whom it is desired to oust, a bad name. Moreover, during such outbreaks indiscriminate shooting is carried on, and Europeans run great risks. When I was Consul-General at Meshed, for a period of seven months shooting went on day and night, and my family had several very narrow escapes. So much

for the abolition of consular guards. The case for the retention of consular courts is even stronger. It may hardly be believed, but is nevertheless a fact that Persian governors are frequently in league with the robbers that infest the main routes and are ruining Persia. Just before the war a relief escort of Indian sowars captured a band that was robbing a caravan and brought it to Meshed. Upon inquiry it was proved that this band was owned by the governor of the district! The Governor-General acknowledged to me that this was the case, and excused his subordinate on the grounds that it was an old custom! Again, in 1917, the Governor of Isfahan leased out each route to a robber band in return for a daily sum. He augmented this nefarious source of revenue by taking a heavy percentage on the sales of the stolen goods! No, until Persia sets her own house in order, it is unwise to remove the protection afforded by the consular courts.

We now come to the heading 'Juridical'. And here again, oblivious of the fact that she is unable to maintain even tolerable order within her own boundaries, Persia demanded that the limits of her empire should be those of the days when she was a Great Power. Eastwards she again claimed the Oxus as her boundary and thereby demanded Transcaspia, Merv, and Khiva. To the north-west she claimed up to the famous fortress of Derbent, including Erivan, the Armenian centre, and Baku. Westwards her ambitions included the entire province of Kurdistan and the important centres of Diarbekir and Mosul; in other words, she wished to annex Asia Minor up to the Euphrates. Had her claims been allowed, she would have been unable to take over and organize these

somewhat derelict provinces, and Persia would herself have suffered severely from an unsuccessful effort, which would have strained her very weak resources. The claims for reparation are genuine and excite our sympathy. The Turkish and Russian armies, advancing and retreating, and then the disbanded and demoralized Russian troops making for home, not only looted foodstuffs and stock, but pulled down the houses to utilize the beams for fuel. In other areas Persia benefited by the purchase of supplies, by the restoration of law and order, and in various other ways, but the loss of life and property in Western Persia was terribly severe. Unfortunately, if compensation were paid to the Persian Government, it would probably be embezzled at Teheran ; at all events it would never reach the sufferers.

After the Armistice a great effort was made by the British Government to set Persia on her legs. Sir Percy Cox, whose brilliant services in the Persian Gulf and in Irak are well known, was temporarily appointed to the Legation at Teheran, and for nine months negotiations proceeded which, in August 1919, culminated in an Anglo-Persian Agreement. By its terms the British Government, after reiterating the undertakings repeatedly given to respect absolutely the independence and integrity of Persia, agreed to supply the services of expert advisers, who should be engaged on contracts and endowed with adequate powers. The British Government also agreed to supply such officers, munitions, and equipment as might be adjudged necessary by a joint commission of British and Persian military experts, who should assemble and estimate the needs of Persia in

respect of the formation of a uniform force. The British Government agreed to help these reforms by making the necessary advances. Other provisions provided for the encouragement of Anglo-Persian enterprise in the form of railways; and for a joint committee of experts to reconstruct the Customs Tariff and provide Persia with an increased income from this source. A loan of £2,000,000 at 7 per cent. was made, and the British Government agreed to co-operate in securing the revision of the treaties actually in force between the two Powers, compensation for damages suffered during the war, and any justifiable rectification of frontiers. It seems unfortunate that this Agreement was not submitted to the League of Nations, and Lord Grey of Fallodon drew attention to the fact. This omission gave a wrong impression to the world, especially in America and France, where it was thought that we had turned Persia into a private preserve. Actually we realized that Persia was an almost derelict power, to whom we were bound by strong ties of sympathy based on our co-operation for three centuries, and coupled with veneration for her splendid past. There were few or no illusions as to the nakedness of the land, or, with the exception of her oil, her poverty, both actual and potential. But we realized it to be our duty to give our neighbour the help and guidance that might save her, and, certainly, had the Agreement been accepted and worked in an atmosphere of mutual trust, it would have saved Persia. It is, however, very difficult in such a backward country to carry through measures of importance. Persians are unable to co-operate. They are ready with destructive criticism, but

they cannot construct. In accordance with the Persian constitution, the Agreement had to be ratified by the Assembly, but the Prime Minister did not summon it. The general opinion is that, had he taken this step immediately, the Assembly might have ratified the Agreement, but that there was very little hope of it doing so, once the propitious season had passed. Persians are remarkably vain, and they think so highly of their barren desert country that they cannot conceive any Power failing to covet it. They consequently considered that the Agreement was an instrument forged for this purpose. Possibly informal agreements, embodying the same terms as those of the formal document, would have excited much less opposition, and would have had the advantage that if one measure was unpopular it could be dropped temporarily, whereas with the Agreement it was a case of all or nothing. Moreover, Persian cabinets enjoy no long existence, and as the negotiations lasted nine months, it was unlikely that the Ministers who initiated them would be able to see them ratified.

In accordance with the Agreement a Treasury Official, who unfortunately had no knowledge of the East nor of the peculiar financial conditions prevailing in Persia, was engaged and proceeded to Teheran accompanied by a staff. It was difficult to estimate the financial position of the country after the Armistice. The value of the kran was very high, being about double the pre-war rate. Consequently the sterling debt of 4½ millions was halved, and the debt of 35 million roubles fell almost to nothing. On the other hand, owing to the disturbed state of the country and the weakness of the Central Government,

little revenue had been paid in, the various governors embezzling it under one excuse or another. The office of the Financial Adviser remained in suspense until the Agreement should be passed, and the loan of two millions was in the same position. The Persian Government, however, showed itself ready to revise the Customs Tariff. This was duly done by representatives of the two Powers, and no sooner was their task completed, than the new tariff was put into force, although, legally speaking, it also had to be passed by the Assembly.

After finance came the important question of the formation of a uniform force for Persia. An Anglo-Persian military commission presented a unanimous report in which the external and internal dangers to which Persia was exposed were examined. The forces in existence, the South Persia Rifles, 6,000 strong, the Cossack Division, 8,000 strong, and the Swedish gendarmerie, 8,400 strong, as also the Persian army which possesses no military value, were passed in review, and a strong recommendation was made that, in future, there should be only two forces in Persia, namely, the army under the Minister of War, and the police, under the Minister of the Interior. It was decided that Persia required an army 60,000 strong, but that as financial considerations prevented the immediate raising of so large a force, an army of 40,000 men should first be aimed at. This would absorb the three forces referred to above, and the estimated cost would be 15 million tomans, or between 4 and 5 millions sterling at the then rate of exchange. The Chief Military Adviser, with whom a Persian officer

would be associated, would be British, but the Chief Staff Officer would be a Persian. There was, of course, no Persian immediately fit to hold such a post, but presumably suitable men would have been trained to hold staff appointments.

Unfortunately Persia was not left free from foreign aggression during this critical period. In the spring of 1920, fifteen ships constituting Denikin's fleet had fled to Enzeli, where they were disarmed and interned. As was inevitable, the Bolshevists appeared on the scene, bombarded Enzeli, and after taking possession of Denikin's ships, proceeded to Resht, and formed a provisional Government under Kuchik Khan, who again came to the front. There was a panic at Teheran, and the British were blamed for not marching out immediately against the invaders. The Cossack Division was finally dispatched. At first it was successful, recapturing Resht, but it then appeared to collapse, and retreated in a demoralized condition to the protection of the British lines to the south of Resht. The British, who had been altruistically providing the pay for this body, whose Russian officers were hostile to the Agreement, declined to continue the subsidy any longer unless the Russian officers resigned, and this they were obliged to do.

In Persia the unexpected may always be expected. The demoralized Cossack Division suddenly regained its spirit and brought off a *coup d'état*. The force marched on Teheran, occupied the Government offices on February 21, and brought to power a certain Sayyid Zia-u-Din, a newspaper editor, who was believed to be capable and honest. He denounced the Agreement, but was prepared

to accept aid from Great Britain, whose disinterestedness he realized. Unfortunately he decided to meet the difficult financial position by arresting the leading grandees and 'squeezing' them. As they were mostly connected with the Shah and possessed great influence, the *Sayyid* soon found that his position was untenable. Moreover, the Bolshevist Minister, who was established in Teheran, took a hand in the game. Finally, Zia-u-Din resigned, and Riza Kuli, who had headed the Cossack *coup d'état*, became dictator. A few days later Kawam-u-Saltana, one of the grandees who was under arrest for embezzlement of revenue, became Prime Minister.

The new trend of Persian politics was clearly shown by the signing of a Russo-Persian Treaty at Moscow in February 1921. By its terms Russia cancelled the large debt due from Persia, and also handed over all Russian concessions in the country free of cost. These included roads, quays, the section of railway from Julfa to Tabriz, steamers on Lake Urumia, land and buildings, &c., the only exception being the valuable fisheries on the Caspian. There was also a mutual undertaking for defence. In the summer the Assembly was convened, after an interval of five years. It showed itself bitterly hostile to Great Britain, although the fact of the withdrawal of British troops from North-west Persia and elsewhere should have proved the sincerity of that Power's intentions. It is, however, of little use to lay arguments before a body of men who are unable to understand them and who are almost as irresponsible as children. Not only was the Anglo-Persian Agreement denounced in unfriendly terms, but the negotiators of

the Agreement were attacked and denounced as traitors. In addition to the treaty with Moscow, negotiations were opened with Afghanistan, with Azerbaijan, and with Kemal Pasha. The main object of these negotiations was to provide for Persian defence, as under the changed conditions she is practically helpless and can be overrun by her more virile neighbours.

The situation is gloomy. Persia will not fight to defend herself and her treasury is empty. She has turned her back on her old friend Great Britain, who, for the time being at any rate, must leave her to seek her own salvation unaided. The Financial Adviser and his staff have left Teheran. The South Persia Rifles, which alone stand between security and anarchy in the province of Fars, have been disbanded, and European women and children are leaving Shiraz. Elsewhere conditions are deteriorating, the Ministers at Teheran having little control over the provinces.

The friends of Persia watch her present plight with sorrow and hope that, before it is too late, the country will realize that it is marching down the broad road that leads to destruction.

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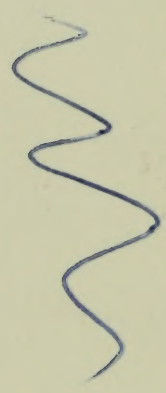
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